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Economic and Social Council

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Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-second session
12–23 March 2018
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Annotated provisional agenda and proposed organization of work*

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century":
   (a) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives:
      (i) Priority theme: challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls;
      (ii) Review theme: participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women;
   (b) Emerging issues, trends, focus areas and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women, including equality between women and men;
   (c) Gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters.
4. Communications concerning the status of women.
5. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions.
6. Provisional agenda for the sixty-third session of the Commission.
7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its sixty-second session.

* The proposed organization of work will be issued as E/CN.6/2018/1/Add.1.

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of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/72/203). The Entity increased its efforts to highlight opportunities for focusing greater attention on gender

Annotations

1. Election of officers

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and pursuant to Council resolution 1987/21 and decision 2002/234, the Commission on the Status of Women elects its Bureau for a two-year period. At the 1st meeting of its sixty-second session, on 24 March 2017, the Commission elected, by acclamation, David Donoghue (Ireland) as Chair of the sixty-second and sixty-third sessions of the Commission, Koki Muli Grignon (Kenya) as Vice-Chair of the sixty-second session and Mauricio Carabali Baquero (Colombia) as Vice-Chair for the sixty-second and sixty-third sessions. The Commission postponed the election of the remaining two Vice-Chairs, on the understanding that upon nomination by their respective groups, candidates would be allowed to participate in the meetings of the Bureau held in preparation of the sixty-second session of the Commission.

In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/16, the Commission appoints five of its members to serve a two-year term on the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women, established in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/27. At the 1st meeting of its sixty-second session, the Commission appointed Belgium to serve as member of the Working Group on Communications at the sixty-second and sixty-third sessions, and Uruguay to serve as member of the Working Group on Communications at the sixty-second session of the Commission.

In the absence of nominations from the African, Asia-Pacific and Eastern European States, the Commission postponed the election of the remaining three members of the Working Group on Communications to a later date, on the understanding that upon endorsement by their respective Groups, the endorsed members of the Commission would be allowed to participate fully in the proceedings of the Working Group on Communications. At its 2nd meeting, the Commission will be called upon to appoint the remaining members of the Working Group.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 7 of the rules of procedure provides that the Commission, at the beginning of each session, shall adopt the agenda of that session.

The provisional agenda and documentation for the sixty-second session of the Commission were approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2017/229.

Preparations for the sixty-second session of the Commission were undertaken in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/6 on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women. Accordingly, the Bureau of the Commission held several meetings as well as informal briefings and consultations with delegations to consider the organization of work for the session.

Following past practice, statements delivered by representatives of delegations of members and observers of the Commission during the general discussion shall be limited to 5 minutes, and statements made on behalf of groups of delegations to 10 minutes. It is also recommended that interventions from non-governmental organizations on themes relevant to the session be integrated into the general discussion and the interactive expert panels, taking into consideration geographical balance.

3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

(a) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives:

(i) Priority theme: challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls;

(ii) Review theme: participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women;

In its resolution 2016/3, the Economic and Social Council decided that, at its sixty-second session, in 2018, the Commission would consider as its priority theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls" and also decided that it would consider as its review theme "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women", in follow-up to the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission at its forty-seventh session (see E/2003/27-E/CN.6/2003/12).

In its resolution 2015/6, the Council decided that the session of the Commission would include a ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as their human rights and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission, and that the segment would include ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues to exchange experiences, lessons learned and good practices, as well as a general discussion on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Council recommended that statements identify goals attained, achievements made and efforts under way to close gaps and meet challenges in relation to the priority theme and the review theme.

Also in its resolution 2015/6, the Council decided that the Commission would evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on a priority theme of a previous session, as its review theme, through an interactive dialogue that includes:

(a) Member States of different regions, on a voluntary basis, presenting their lessons learned, challenges and best practices that identify means for accelerated implementation through national and regional experiences;

(b) Ways to support and achieve accelerated implementation, including through addressing data gaps and challenges in the enhanced collection, reporting, use and analysis of data with regard to the theme, at the national, regional and global levels.

Ministerial segment

The Ministerial segment of the Commission will be held from 12 to 14 March 2018 and will include a series of ministerial round tables and other high-level interactive dialogues.

Interactive expert panel on the priority theme

The Commission will hold one interactive expert panel with the participation of experts from Governments, the United Nations system, civil society and other stakeholder groups that work on the priority theme.

Interactive dialogues on the review theme

The Commission will hold two interactive dialogues with voluntary presentations by Member States from different regions on the review theme, and one interactive expert panel on innovative data approaches for measuring progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls (E/CN.6/2018/3)

Discussion guide for the ministerial round tables on the priority theme: note by the Secretariat (E/CN.6/2018/5)

Report of the Secretary-General on the participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (E/CN.6/2018/4)

(b) Emerging issues, trends, focus areas and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women, including equality between women and men

In its resolution 2015/6, the Economic and Social Council determined that the Commission would, as necessary, continue to discuss emerging issues, trends, focus areas and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women, including equality between women and men, that require timely consideration, taking into account developments at the global and regional levels as well as planned activities within the United Nations, where increased attention to gender perspectives is required, and with attention to relevant issues on the agenda of the Council, in particular its annual main theme, as applicable.

In the same resolution, the Council requested the Bureau of the Commission, prior to the session, to identify such an emerging issue, trend, focus area or new approach, in consultation with all Member States, through their regional groups, and taking into account inputs from other relevant stakeholders, for consideration by the Commission through an interactive dialogue.

Following consultations, the Bureau proposed that no emerging issue be identified for the sixty-second session.

(c) Gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters

Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

In accordance with paragraph 67 (c) of General Assembly resolution 64/289, the Commission will have before it the annual report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the normative aspects of the work of UN-Women and on its implementation of the policy guidance provided by the Commission.

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

In its resolution 2017/10 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council requested the Commission to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means and to submit to the Commission at its sixty-second session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

Violence against women

In its resolution 50/166 on the role of the former United Nations Development Fund for Women (now UN-Women) in eliminating violence against women, the General Assembly requested the Fund to include in its regular reports information on the establishment of a trust fund in support of national, regional and international actions to eliminate violence against women and to provide such information to the Commission.

Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts

In its resolution 60/1, the Commission on the Status of Women requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its sixty-second session a report on the implementation of the resolution, including relevant practical recommendations, taking into account the information provided by States and relevant international organizations.

Women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS

In its resolution 60/2, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the implementation of the resolution to the Commission at its sixty-second session.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

In accordance with article 21.2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women are transmitted to the Commission for its information.

Programme matters

The Commission will have before it for its consideration a note by the Secretary-General on the preparation of the strategic framework for the period 2020-2021. The Commission is invited to review the proposed biennial programme plan for gender equality and the empowerment of women and provide its comments to the Secretary-General. The proposed biennial programme plan, modified as appropriate, will be submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its session in June 2018. Its recommendations thereon will be transmitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session when it considers the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2020-2021.

Documentation

Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on the normative aspects of the work of the Entity (E/CN.6/2018/2)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts (E/CN.6/2018/7)

Report of the Secretary-General on women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS (E/CN.6/2018/8)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on the activities of the United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women (A/HRC/38/3-E/CN.6/2018/9)

Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its sixty-fourth, sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth sessions (A/72/38)

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the results of the sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (E/CN.6/2018/12)

Note by the Secretary-General on the proposed strategic framework for the period 2020-2021: programme 14, gender equality and empowerment of women

4. Communications concerning the status of women

In its resolution 76 (V), the Economic and Social Council established a procedure by which the Commission would receive and consider communications relating to the status of women. In its resolution 304 I (XI), the Council amended resolution 76 (V) and requested the Secretary-General to compile, before each session of the Commission, a list of confidential and non-confidential communications, containing a brief indication of the substance of each communication.

In its resolution 1983/27, the Council reaffirmed the mandate of the Commission to consider confidential and non-confidential communications on the status of women and authorized the Commission to appoint a working group to consider such communications and prepare a report thereon for the Commission.

In its resolution 1993/11, the Council reaffirmed that the Commission was empowered to make recommendations to the Council on what action should be taken on emerging trends and patterns of discrimination against women revealed by such communications.

In its decision 2002/235, the Council decided, in order to make the communications procedure of the Commission more effective and efficient:

(a) That the Commission, starting at its forty-seventh session, should appoint, at each session, the members of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women for the next session so that the members would be able to meet to enable the Secretariat to issue their report three working days before the adoption of the agenda by the Commission;

(b) To request the Secretary-General:

(i) To inform Governments about each communication pertaining to them that would be considered by the Commission and give them at least 12 weeks before the consideration of such communications by the Working Group;

(ii) To ensure that the members of the Working Group receive in advance the lists of communications, including replies from Governments, if any, to be taken into account in preparing its report for examination by the Commission.

In its resolution 2009/16, the Economic and Social Council decided that the Commission, starting at its fifty-fourth session, should appoint the members of the Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women for a two-year period.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the list of confidential communications concerning the status of women (E/CN.6/2018/R.1 and Add.1)

5. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions

The Commission will have before it a letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council on resolutions and decisions adopted by the Council, for its consideration and action, as necessary.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/1, the Economic and Social Council shall invite its subsidiary bodies and the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies to contribute, as appropriate, to its work in keeping with the Council's agreed theme.

The theme for the Council's 2018 session is "From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities".

Documentation

Letter dated 11 December 2017 from the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed to the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2018/10)

Note by the Secretariat on the contribution by the Commission on the Status of Women to the work of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development (E/CN.6/2018/11)

6. Provisional agenda for the sixty-third session of the Commission

In accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, the Commission will have before it a draft provisional agenda for its sixty-third session, including the list of documents to be submitted for its consideration.

7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its sixty-second session

In accordance with rule 37 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, the Commission shall submit to the Council a report on the work of its sixty-second session.

Annex

Membership of the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-second session (2018)

(45 members; four-year term)

Member	*Term expires at close of session in the year*
Albania	2019
Bahrain	2021
Bangladesh	2018
Belgium	2019
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2019
Brazil	2020
Canada	2021
Chile	2021
China	2021
Colombia	2019
Congo	2018
Egypt	2018
El Salvador	2018
Equatorial Guinea	2019
Eritrea	2020
Estonia	2021
Ghana	2018
Guatemala	2020
Guyana	2018
India	2018
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2019
Ireland	2021
Israel	2021
Kazakhstan	2018
Kenya	2018
Kuwait	2020
Liberia	2019

Member	*Term expires at close of session in the year*
Liechtenstein	2019
Malawi	2019
Mongolia	2019
Namibia	2021
Niger	2021
Nigeria	2020
Norway	2020
Peru	2021
Qatar	2020
Republic of Korea	2018
Russian Federation	2020
Spain	2019
Tajikistan	2018
Trinidad and Tobago	2020
Tunisia	2021
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2020
United Republic of Tanzania	2018
Uruguay	2018

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Summary

The present report, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/289, provides a summary of the normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Entity's contribution to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in intergovernmental processes. It also provides information on how the Entity has contributed to the implementation of the policy guidance provided by the Commission on the Status of Women. The report covers the calendar year 2017.

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I. Introduction

1. In 2017, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) continued to support Member States in accelerating progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls through research, policy analysis, recommendations in reports of the Secretary-General and the provision of substantive and technical support and expertise to Member States for the systematic integration of a gender perspective into intergovernmental norms and standards. The Entity's role in supporting Member States to strengthen global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women is a foundation for the work of the entire organization. That role permeates the Entity's new strategic plan, 2018–2021 (UNW/2017/6/Rev.1), which was endorsed in August 2017 by the Executive Board of UN-Women and underlines the Entity's contribution to linking global and national policies for gender equality.

2. UN-Women focused much of its intergovernmental support on addressing key gaps and challenges in the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN-Women supported Member States in the adoption of agreed conclusions that address the structural barriers that hinder women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work (see E/2017/27, chap. I). The Entity also placed a high priority on contributing to the global review process of the 2030 Agenda, including in the context of the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

3. At the same time, UN-Women amplified efforts aimed at addressing gaps and challenges in the implementation of existing normative frameworks through its support to governments at the country and regional levels. The Entity's operational work was guided by intergovernmental normative frameworks, including the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixtieth session on women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (see E/2016/27, chap. I). The Entity played a key role in supporting countries in formulating or updating national gender equality action plans, strengthening national statistical capacities and in promoting gender mainstreaming and policy coherence in the work of government ministries towards a gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

II. Strengthening normative work on gender equality

4. The section below provides an overview of the support provided by UN-Women to strengthen gender equality norms and standards in the Commission on the Status of Women, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, including its subsidiary bodies.

A. Commission on the Status of Women

5. UN-Women, as the substantive secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women, supported all aspects of the work of the Commission in its role as the principal policymaking body charged with setting global standards and formulating policies to promote gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and their human rights worldwide. This included logistical and substantive support in preparation, and during the in-session servicing, of the Commission's official

meetings and technical support to the negotiations on the agreed conclusions on the priority theme. In preparation for the sixty-first session of the Commission, UN-Women convened an expert group meeting on the priority theme of "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work", which examined the challenges and opportunities for fostering greater economic empowerment and independence for women in the changing world of work.

6. The report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme (E/CN.6/2017/3) was prepared by UN-Women. The report demonstrated that women's economic empowerment and the realization of women's right to and rights at work are essential for the achievement of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It concluded that transforming the world of work for women requires the elimination of structural barriers and discriminatory laws and social norms in order to create equal economic opportunities and outcomes. Therefore, economic and social policies should target the elimination of inequalities and gaps related to women's labour force participation, entrepreneurship, pay and working conditions, social protection and unpaid care and domestic work. Education and skills training should be strengthened so as to enable women to respond to new opportunities in the changing world of work. Particular attention should be paid to the situation of women in the growing informal and migrant economies.

7. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the priority theme build on the recommendations set out in the report of the Secretary-General and provide a set of global standards that address the connection between women's economic empowerment and women's right to work and rights at work. They also make an important contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, providing critical impetus for women's economic empowerment, eliminating poverty, promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work, and equality within and among countries. The agreed conclusions recognize that women face structural barriers to their economic empowerment, and that women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work is a significant constraint on their economic opportunities. All forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment at work, are recognized as a major impediment to women's economic empowerment. In the agreed conclusions, Member States and other stakeholders are urged to take action to promote policies that support the reconciliation and sharing of work and family responsibilities between women and men, to eliminate occupational segregation by addressing structural barriers, gender stereotypes and negative social norms and to uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in the public and private sectors. They are urged to establish and strengthen inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems, including floors, and to promote the transition from informal to formal work.

8. At its sixty-first session, the Commission also evaluated progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions adopted at the fifty-eighth session, on "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls", as its review theme (see E/2014/27, chap. I and E/CN.6/2017/4). The report of the Secretary-General, prepared by UN-Women, concluded that the implementation of the agreed conclusions has been uneven and recommended that actions to accelerate their implementation should take a comprehensive approach, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda. During an interactive dialogue, 11 Member States[1] presented information, on a voluntary basis, on lessons learned and challenges faced, and identified best practices and means for accelerated programme implementation through national and regional efforts. During

[1] Bulgaria, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Liberia, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Slovakia, Spain and the United Republic of Tanzania.

the presentations. Member States focused on those action areas of the agreed conclusions that were highly relevant to the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States emphasized that progress has been made in enacting legislation to address discrimination against women, in particular as regards combating violence against women and promoting access to justice and women's labour and economic rights, but challenges remained and more comprehensive action was needed to achieve substantive equality.

9. The Commission adopted a resolution at its sixty-first session on preventing and eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace, and recommended a resolution for adoption by the Economic and Social Council, on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women.

B. General Assembly

10. UN-Women continued to provide normative support to the General Assembly. For the seventy-second session of the Assembly, the Entity prepared the report of the Secretary-General on women in development (A/72/282), which stressed that achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the eradication of poverty will require concerted action to facilitate the transition of women working in informal employment to formal employment, expand social protection coverage, recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, and promote women's access to and control over assets, including land, property and financial services.

11. UN-Women prepared three additional reports of the Secretary-General, the first of which was the report on the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas (A/72/207), which highlighted that most women and girls in rural areas, worldwide, fare worse than rural men and urban women and that the challenges rural women and girls face have been magnified by the pace and complexity of globalization, urbanization, migration and climate change, among other processes. The report on violence against women migrant workers (A/72/215) stressed that women migrant workers continue to face a heightened risk of abuse, extortion and sexual and gender-based violence. Persistent gaps remain in the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data on the violence experienced by women migrant workers, which is often attributable to the high rate of migrant women in informal and unregulated sectors. The report on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/72/203) concluded that progress in gender mainstreaming remains uneven and recommended that further measures be taken by intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system to fully mainstream a gender perspective into all items under their consideration and within their respective mandates.

12. UN-Women provided Member States with technical and substantive support during the negotiations on the resolutions on women in development and on the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

13. The Entity continued to provide Member States with normative support to strengthen gender perspectives in other resolutions of the General Assembly. The Entity focused on resolutions of the Second and Third Committees that had little or no gender equality content in the past, on the basis of the analysis presented in the report on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to and implementation

of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/72/203). The Entity increased its efforts to highlight opportunities for focusing greater attention on gender perspectives in the areas of disarmament and humanitarian affairs.

14. UN-Women organized a special event of the Second Committee, presenting a data and policy perspective on combating poverty and promoting gender equality. Experts discussed innovative policy solutions for reducing poverty and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, in order to inform the Second Committee's work. Together with the World Bank, UN-Women presented the initial results of a global study on the different experiences of women and men in the context of poverty. The study concluded that between the ages of 20 and 34, women are more likely to be poor than men, which coincides with the peak productive and reproductive ages of both men and women, and can be related to such factors as having young children in the household and the higher likelihood of women leaving the labour market in response to increasing demands on their time in terms of time allocated to unpaid care work. The study also found that households with children are among the poorest, and that single parent households with children, predominantly single mothers with children, face a far higher risk of poverty. The study further concluded that divorce, separation and widowhood affect women more negatively than men, with divorced women between the ages of 18 to 49 more than twice as likely to be poor as divorced men in that same age group. On the basis of the initial results of the global study, UN-Women and the World Bank recommended that poverty eradication strategies place greater attention on the needs of women during specific periods of their lives and provide accessible, affordable and quality childcare services for families with children, in particular single parent families, as well as social protection transfers for women with children.

15. During the high-level week of the seventy-second session, the General Assembly held a high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. UN-Women provided substantive support to Member States during the negotiations on the political declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (General Assembly resolution 72/1), which highlights the root causes of trafficking, including sexual violence and gender discrimination, as well as the need to develop gender-sensitive policies and strengthen women's and girls' roles as agents of change to combat trafficking. It commits Member States to promoting awareness-raising campaigns, improve the collection of data disaggregated by age and sex and strengthen collective action among stakeholders. UN-Women participated in the interactive panel discussion on the Global Plan of Action and effective partnerships for the prevention and prosecution of trafficking in persons, also taking into consideration the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Entity called on stakeholders to ensure that efforts to prevent trafficking in persons address the root causes of gender inequality, including negative social norms and stereotypes, as well as the continuing acceptance of violence against women and girls in societies.

16. Also during the high-level week, UN-Women organized and/or co-organized side events, which sought to bring awareness to policy measures and best practices to contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Together with the International Labour Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, UN-Women launched the Equal Pay International Coalition. By working with governments, employers and workers and their representative organizations, and other stakeholders, the multi-stakeholder initiative will contribute to the removal of barriers to women's economic empowerment and ensure women's free and equal participation in the global economy, as well as support research and data collection, advocacy, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building to make equal pay for work of equal value a reality and

reduce the gender pay gap. UN-Women also co-organized a high-level round-table dialogue with the Group of Champions for Women's Economic Empowerment, entitled "Leave no one behind: actions and commitments for women's economic empowerment". The dialogue brought together leaders from government, the United Nations system, the private sector, multilateral institutions and civil society organizations to demonstrate their commitment to women's economic empowerment, in line with the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in response to the call to action of the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

17. The Spotlight Initiative of the European Union and the United Nations was launched during the high-level week. The initiative is a global fund to address violence against women and girls, with the European Union and the United Nations partnering to deploy targeted, large-scale investments, totalling €500 million, over the course of five years. UN-Women will play a central role in this initiative, alongside the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, under the leadership and coordination of the Deputy Secretary-General and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. UN-Women will lead the global technical team that will be established to provide technical guidance for country programming, ensure coherence throughout regions and guarantee the highest technical level of interventions.

C. Security Council

18. UN-Women continued to play a leading role in promoting and supporting the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. The work encompasses the follow-up to the commitments and recommendations resulting from the 2015 high-level review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), including those outlined in the global study on the implementation of Council resolution 1325 (2000)[2] and in Council resolution 2242 (2015). UN-Women also played an active role in supporting the implementation of gender-specific recommendations from the Council's reviews of peacekeeping operations (A/70/95-S/2015/446) and of the peacebuilding architecture (A/69/968-S/2015/490).

19. On 27 October 2017, the Security Council convened its annual open debate on women, peace and security. UN-Women, with the support of the Standing Committee on Women, Peace and Security, coordinated the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2017/861), which informed the open debate. The open debate registered one of the highest number of speakers of any Security Council meeting of the year. Six Member States participated at the ministerial level and delivered statements during the open debate, demonstrating the importance attached to the women, peace and security agenda.

20. In response to the mandate in Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), UN-Women continued to work to integrate its work on women, peace and security and counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism. UN-Women has expanded its portfolio of policy and programme activities aimed at preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism and currently has over 25 ongoing or planned country- and region-specific programmes in this area. Also in response to the mandate in Council resolution 2242 (2015), UN-Women supported the efforts of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to integrate a gender perspective as a cross-cutting issue throughout their activities. The

[2] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325* (New York, 2015).

Entity co-chairs the inter-agency working group on adopting a gender-sensitive approach to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, which has prepared a joint project on the gender dimensions of returning foreign terrorist fighters, to begin in 2018.

21. The Entity continued to serve as the secretariat for the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. In Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), the Group is tasked with facilitating a more systematic approach to the Council's work on women, peace and security so as to enable greater Council oversight and coordination of implementation efforts in this area. The Group, under its co-chairs for 2017 (Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay) convened meetings on Mali, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Central African Republic, Yemen and the Lake Chad Basin region. In support of the Group's work, UN-Women facilitated the participation of women from civil society in country-specific meetings of the Security Council, a new practice that was called for by the Council in its resolution 2242 (2015). In 2017, Council meetings on Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan included a briefing from women representing civil society. Also as part of its support to the Group, UN-Women provided extensive background on the topic of women, peace and security to Council members ahead of the Council's visits to African Union headquarters in Ethiopia, the Lake Chad Basin region, the Sahel and Colombia, which increased the visibility of women, peace and security issues during those visits.

22. The Entity continued its advocacy for increased financing for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. As a member of the Funding Board of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund,[1] UN-Women actively engaged in resource mobilization efforts for the Fund. The Entity also provided secretariat support to the Fund and promoted effective coordination among Funding Board members. Launched in February 2016, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund is a dedicated mechanism for support to women, peace and security efforts and aims to address funding gaps for women peacebuilders. The Fund has supported women's organizations in Burundi, Colombia, Jordan and Solomon Islands. However, despite notable results, resource constraints have limited eligible countries' access to the Fund, with 19 of the 23 countries eligible for support yet to receive funding.

23. The Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, which was launched by 63 Member States in 2016, provides a mechanism for bridging policy and practice, coordinating action, the sharing of good practices and more effective targeting of gaps and challenges. The Network, supported by UN-Women, held its inaugural meeting in April 2017 in Spain. Over 100 national focal points, other government actors and civil society representatives from 61 countries discussed innovative uses of national action plans, such as addressing structural barriers to gender equality and preventing violent extremism, as well as civil society engagement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of such plans.

24. In support of the women, peace and security agenda, the Entity also made its technical expertise on gender equality available to key actors of peace processes and mediation efforts and deployed experts on sexual and gender-based violence crimes to international investigations conducted by commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions. It also supported the development and implementation of national and regional action plans and strategies on women, peace and security.

[1] Formerly known as the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.

D. Economic and Social Council

25. The Economic and Social Council, including its subsidiary bodies, plays a critical role in policy coherence and in the integrated and coordinated follow-up to and review of outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields. The Council has a leading role in overseeing the follow-up, review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through the forum on financing for development follow-up and the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Council. UN-Women considers its engagement with and the provision of normative support to the Council, its processes and subsidiary bodies, as critically important in achieving sustained attention to the gender-responsive implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

26. As in previous years, UN-Women prepared the report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2017/57 and Corr.1). The report presents progress made in accountability for gender mainstreaming among the entities of the United Nations system through the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the operational activities of the United Nations development system. In 2016, the proportion of ratings indicative of meeting or exceeding requirements of the System-wide Action Plan increased to 64 per cent, an increase of seven percentage points from 2015. For the fifth consecutive year however, United Nations system entities performed the weakest in the area of resource allocation, with only 22 per cent of entities meeting or exceeding requirements. The report highlighted the Entity's key role in coordinating United Nations system efforts towards the next version of the System-wide Action Plan, which contextualizes the Action Plan within the 2030 Agenda, to be rolled out in 2018. This included the administration of a survey, two inter-agency workshops and 20 in-person consultations. UN-Women also supported eight United Nations system entities in piloting the new version of the System-wide Action Plan. The Entity played a key role in updating the United Nations country team performance indicators on gender equality and the empowerment of women (the "scorecard") as well as the guidance for the new generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, which include gender-specific interventions and integrated approaches to implementing strategic sustainable development outcomes.

27. The Entity provided technical support to Member States during the negotiations on Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/9 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. In the resolution, the Council urged the United Nations system to accelerate gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes, including in support of the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It called upon the United Nations system to accelerate the full and effective mainstreaming of a gender perspective at the global, regional and country levels, including by launching and fully implementing, beginning in 2018, the updated System-wide Action Plan and the United Nations country team scorecard. The resolution included a request to the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system to ensure that recruitment strategies, promotion and retention policies, career development and policies regarding anti-harassment and sexual harassment, among others, accelerate the achievement of gender parity in the United Nations.

28. Also in 2017, UN-Women placed a high priority on participating in the Council's forum on financing for development follow-up. As a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, the Entity contributed to the

2017 report of the Task Force (E/FFDF/2017/2). The report stressed that measures to increase long-term investments and address short-term vulnerabilities need to be mutually reinforcing and investments in gender equality are essential to achieving sustained and inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

29. During the negotiations on the negotiated outcome of the forum on financing for development follow-up (see E/FFDF/2017/3), the Entity provided substantive support to Member States through key messages based on research and analysis, as well as by utilizing the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-first session. In the negotiated outcome, Member States recognized that significant economic and social losses are the result of a lack of progress in achieving gender equality and that it is therefore critical that policies and actions seek to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Member States also underlined that globally, gross domestic product could increase significantly if every country achieved gender equality and increased the participation of women in the formal labour force, as well as in leadership and decision-making positions.

30. During the Council's humanitarian segment, UN-Women briefed Member States on the gender marker in humanitarian response as an important tool to track the proportion of funding dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian contexts. UN-Women also provided substantive support to Member States to further enhance a gender perspective in the resolution on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (Council resolution 2017/14). The Entity's technical inputs contributed to the strong condemnation by Member States of all acts of sexual and gender-based violence and the call for stronger responses, for example by cooperating with local women's organizations and seeking to ensure the provision of meaningful access to medical, legal and psychosocial and livelihood services, for all victims, survivors and those affected by such violence.

31. During its 2017 session under the auspices of the Council, the high-level political forum on sustainable development considered the theme of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" and undertook an in-depth review of the following Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 1, on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2, on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture; Goal 3, on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages; Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls; Goal 9, on building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation; and Goal 14, on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Goal 17, on the means of implementation and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, is discussed annually.

32. UN-Women used the preparatory process to systematically provide Member States and other stakeholders with insights, good practices and data on the effective, gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, thus laying the groundwork for strengthened gender equality outcomes. The Entity also actively engaged Member States to outline opportunities for the integration of gender perspectives in voluntary national reviews to the high-level political forum, in line with the commitment to systematically mainstream a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The efforts prompted a significant number of Member States to address gender perspectives in their voluntary reviews.

33. As a contribution to the forum's in-depth review of Goal 5, UN-Women co-led the preparation of a background note that reviewed the implementation of Goal 5,[4] along with the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and in collaboration with other United Nations entities. The note addressed the status of implementation of Goal 5 targets and the principal interlinkages between Goal 5 and other Sustainable Development Goals, as well as gaps, challenges and opportunities for accelerating the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The note concluded with recommendations to enhance national-level implementation, and stressed the importance of eliminating structural barriers to gender equality, strengthening accountability mechanisms for gender equality, increasing investment and financing for gender equality and increasing data collection capacity. The note also highlighted the importance of an active civil society, including in the context of local and national-level decision-making.

34. As an input to the in-depth review by the high-level political forum of Goal 5, UN-Women organized an expert group meeting on strategies for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls through the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The meeting brought together Member States, United Nations entities, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to discuss ways and means for the effective implementation of Goal 5, as well as for harnessing the synergies and addressing any trade-offs in the integrated and interlinked implementation of the Goals. The meeting's key recommendations on accelerating the eradication of poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world called for: linking the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with international commitments and human rights treaty obligations; addressing structural barriers to the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda; mainstreaming a gender perspective in all actions to address systemic issues affecting implementation of the Goals, such as macroeconomic, trade and financial policies, climate change, conflict and militarization, and migration; ensuring the full integration of gender equality policies and strategies into national sustainable development frameworks; strengthening the participation of all stakeholders in the implementation of Goal 5, including women's organizations; enhancing the engagement and accountability of the private sector; mobilizing political will to prioritize existing resources towards policies and programmes that advance gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; and strengthening the availability and use of gender statistics. The recommendations[5] strengthened the high-level political forum in its role of providing political leadership, guidance and recommendations for the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda.

35. The note on the implementation of Goal 5 and the recommendations from the expert group meeting formed the basis of UN-Women substantive support to Member States during the negotiations on the ministerial declaration of the high-level political forum (E/HLS/2017/1). Building on these and other inputs, the ministerial declaration reiterates the urgency of addressing structural barriers to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, such as discriminatory laws and policies, gender stereotypes, harmful practices and negative social norms and attitudes and underscores that all other Goals need to be implemented in a manner that delivers results for women and girls. Critically, the declaration urges countries to fully integrate gender equality strategies into national sustainable development frameworks so as to promote greater policy coherence, recognizing that achieving

[4] Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14383SDG5format-revOD.pdf.

[5] Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/15791Recommendations_SDG_5.pdf.

gender equality will require both targeted action and the mainstreaming of gender into all efforts. This recommendation addresses the concern of some national gender equality mechanisms that national gender equality strategies and national development strategies are often on two parallel tracks.

36. On the occasion of the 2017 high-level political forum, UN-Women, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Statistics Division, hosted a round-table discussion with the Chairs of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. The discussion provided a key opportunity for functional commissions to present their ongoing efforts at integrating a gender perspective in their work and their contribution to the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as to expand ongoing collaboration, interaction and information exchange on issues of common interest.

37. UN-Women continued its engagement with functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council throughout the year. The Entity contributed to the work of the Statistical Commission, as well as of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, in the development of gender statistics. In particular, UN-Women supported the development of internationally accepted standards and methodologies for use by governments to monitor the implementation of targets for which such standards do not yet exist. As a result of the Entity's substantive support, internationally accepted methodologies were recently developed and agreed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group for three indicators under Goal 5: 5.5.1, proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments; 5.a.2, proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control; and 5.c.1, proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

38. Building on work initiated in 2016, the Entity further expanded its contribution pertaining to women and drug policy, participating in an intersessional meeting of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs that focused on the implementation of the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem (Assembly resolution S-30/1). During its participation in the expert panel relating to drugs and human rights, youth, children, women and communities, UN-Women highlighted four specific areas of action and intervention that require more attention in order to address the needs and challenges of women in the context of the world drug problem, namely: discrimination against women and girls, women's full participation and leadership in decision-making, mainstreaming a gender perspective into drugs-related policies and programmes, and strengthening capacity for gender statistics.

39. UN-Women also provided substantive expertise to Member States during the negotiations of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on its resolution 26/3 (see E/2017/30-E/CN.15/2017/13) on mainstreaming a gender perspective into crime prevention and criminal justice policies and programmes and into efforts to prevent and combat transnational organized crime. The resolution calls on Member States to mainstream a gender perspective into criminal justice systems, including through legislation, policies and programmes, as well as by promoting gender-specific measures in crime prevention and protection policies.

40. UN-Women continued to provide technical expertise to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, through its participation in the Commission's panel discussion on new innovation approaches to support the

implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Placing emphasis on gender perspectives, the Entity highlighted ways to manage technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment, including through women's and girls' participation as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

III. Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women through thematic international and other normative processes

41. The following section summarizes the normative support, engagement and advocacy efforts of UN-Women in relation to a range of intergovernmental processes.

A. Human rights

42. UN-Women continued to provide normative support to the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council, including by supporting Member States at the national level in preparing for the review, assisting with the preparation of reports by stakeholders, contributing to United Nations country team reports, making interventions at meetings of the Human Rights Council and supporting the implementation of recommendations at the country level.

43. UN-Women further expanded its collaboration with other mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, such as the special procedures. In collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, UN-Women co-organized a side event at the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, with the Permanent Mission of Chile, on the elimination of femicide and gender-related killings of women. The Special Rapporteur also participated in the launch of the UN-Women/European Union initiative to end violence against women and girls in the Western Balkans and Turkey. This three-year programme aims at ending discrimination and violence against women through addressing negative social norms and stereotypes and strengthening the capacity of women's organizations to advocate for the effective implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes to prevent and respond to violence against women, as well as supporting governments in the provision of comprehensive, multisectoral services for survivors of violence. UN-Women also continued to ensure that all Council-mandated commissions of inquiry and, increasingly, all fact-finding and expert missions have the required gender expertise to fulfil their mandates. In 2017, this included providing sexual and gender-based crime investigators or gender advisers for the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, the team of international experts on the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic; the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan; and the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen.

44. In coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, UN-Women supported the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Support was provided to States parties for reporting under the Convention, preparing for the constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and in connection with the preparation of shadow reports by civil society organizations and reports by United Nations country teams submitted to the Committee.

45. Support provided by UN-Women to the Committee included work on general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, which elaborates on the gender-based nature of this form of violence, and builds on the work of the Committee and other international human rights mechanisms as well as developments at the national, regional and international levels. UN-Women, in partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, designed a practitioner's toolkit on women's access to justice in support of the implementation of general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice. The toolkit is due to be launched at the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2018. Through its operational work, UN-Women continued to support the implementation of and follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations, including their reflection in national laws, policies and programmes.

46. UN-Women continued to highlight the situation of women and girls with disabilities in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Entity co-sponsored and participated in events during the tenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and supported the participation of women with disabilities at the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

B. Climate change

47. In 2017, UN-Women provided technical and substantive support to parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, leading to the adoption of the first gender action plan at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in November 2017. The adoption of the gender action plan constitutes the culmination of the Entity's systematic contribution and support in this area over the past five years.

48. At the request of parties, UN-Women supported the organization of an informal consultation to initiate discussions on possible elements of the gender action plan, including proposals for priority areas and activities. The report on the consultation became the basis for discussion during the in-session workshop on the gender action plan at the forty-sixth session of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Implementation, held in May 2017. UN-Women subsequently prepared an elements paper, containing priority areas, activities, timelines and deliverables, which the Entity presented at an informal meeting of parties at the beginning of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties.

49. The gender action plan advances women's full, equal and meaningful participation, promotes gender-responsive climate policy and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention and the work of parties and all stakeholders at all levels. The action plan includes five priority areas on capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and communication; gender balance, participation and women's leadership; coherence; gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation; and monitoring and reporting.

50. During the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, UN-Women organized a high-level event on promoting gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches to maximize development co-benefits of climate action. The event engaged key representative constituencies to articulate their views on how commitments on gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights should be addressed in the implementation of the Convention and the Paris Agreement, in

particular in parties' nationally determined contributions, the global stocktake and the facilitative dialogue.

C. Desertification

51. In response to the growing interest of parties in promoting the gender-responsive implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, UN-Women stepped up its work in this area. Particular emphasis was placed on women's contribution and leadership and on the importance of monitoring, reporting and the generation of evidence on the mutually reinforcing benefits of gender equality and efforts to combat land degradation and desertification.

52. The Entity organized a two-day workshop on the occasion of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to build the capacity of parties and other stakeholders on gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention, including on land degradation neutrality. The workshop provided information on concepts, mandates and methodologies for integrating a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention and subsequent decisions of parties, as well as in the planning and implementation of land degradation, desertification, drought and land degradation-neutral interventions at the national level. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the Convention secretariat, UN-Women also co-organized a "Gender Day" during the Conference of the Parties, with a focus on gender mainstreaming in the development of transformative land degradation-neutral projects.

53. UN-Women efforts contributed to the adoption by the parties of a decision on gender equality and women's empowerment for the enhanced and effective implementation of the Convention, in which the Conference of the Parties endorsed the gender action plan to support the gender-responsive implementation of the Convention's 2018–2030 strategic framework. The gender action plan includes thematic areas on women's participation in decision-making during the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives to implement the Convention; integrating women's economic empowerment in implementation activities in order to eradicate their extreme poverty; strengthening women's land rights and access to resources, including by fulfilling Sustainable Development Goal targets; and enhancing women's access to improved knowledge and technologies that relate to effective implementation of the Convention. The decision also requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, which supports countries in translating the Convention into action and achieving land degradation neutrality at the national level, to partner with the Rio Conventions, UN-Women and other relevant United Nations entities, international organizations and development partners to support parties in piloting the implementation of the Gender Plan of Action.

D. Refugees and migrants

54. Following the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants by the General Assembly in September 2016 (Assembly resolution 71/1), UN-Women strategically expanded its contributions to the work towards the global compacts called for in that resolution. To inform the process of developing the global compact on refugees, UN-Women developed a position paper and aide-memoire[6] providing concrete recommendations on how commitments on gender equality and the

[6] Available at www.unhcr.org/en-us/events/conferences/59ddfcc97/aide-memoire-gender-equality-empowerment-women-global-compact-refugees.html.

empowerment of women and girls can be operationalized across the four thematic sections of the comprehensive refugee response framework's plan of action, and addressing gender issues in cross-cutting areas, such as resources, capacity, evidence and data, participation and leadership, and accountability. UN-Women, in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, co-hosted an event in October 2017 to disseminate these key messages and brief Member States on the imperative of the global compact adequately reflecting the New York Declaration's specific commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment and ways to translate those commitments into action.

55. UN-Women continued to contribute to the consultations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. With the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-Women in 2016 organized an expert meeting on addressing women's human rights in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, in which representatives of human rights treaty bodies, United Nations entities, civil society organizations and academia participated. This was followed by a UN-Women multi-stakeholder meeting on strategies to address women's human rights in the global compact on migration, in January 2017. A set of recommendations resulted from both meetings that highlighted specific areas to be strengthened in order to ensure that the rights of migrant women and girls are promoted and protected at all stages of migration, while recognizing women's agency throughout the migration process.[7] UN-Women also contributed a set of key messages to the preparatory meeting held in Mexico, in December 2017.

56. The Entity provided technical support to the Global Migration Group to ensure that gender perspectives were mainstreamed throughout all outputs, including the six issue briefs prepared by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration for the thematic sessions during the preparatory phases for the global compact. UN-Women, together with the International Labour Organization, co-led the drafting of the issue brief for the thematic session on irregular migration and regular pathways.

IV. Support for the implementation of policy guidance

57. As countries accelerated the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN-Women expanded its role in supporting a strengthened gender-responsive approach to those efforts. The Entity's operational work was strongly informed by the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission at its sixtieth session on women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development. They are also reflected in the Entity's strategic plan, 2018–2021, which reinforces the linkages between implementation of the Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

58. UN-Women worked extensively with national mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as other line ministries, in the formulation and implementation of national gender action plans. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, UN-Women provided technical and substantive support to the national gender mechanism in drafting the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2015–2017, including resource and budgeting maps. Following the adoption of the National Action Plan, the Entity provided support in 2017 to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and the Ministry of Emergency Situations, in the development of sectoral gender action plans.

[7] Available at www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/3/addressing-womens-rights-in-global-compact-for-migration.

59. In Bangladesh, UN-Women organized a national consultation on the agreed conclusions adopted by the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to identify ways to strengthen government action plans for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The national consultations, which included the participation of over 50 representatives from Government, development partners, the United Nations system and civil society organizations, used the agreed conclusions as a tool to analyse the gaps in achieving gender equality targets and to identify strategies to implement localized action plans for the Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh. Following the national consultation, UN-Women supported the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in preparing an analysis that linked the existing implementation plans for the Goals of line ministries with the agreed conclusions. The analysis was then disseminated to line ministries and civil society organizations to promote focused attention to the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

60. In support of the data capacities of governments, in the United Republic of Tanzania, for example, UN-Women supported the government in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals through the analysis and development of gender-responsive indicator frameworks that enable tracking of national commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women across different national and international frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the national five-year development plan. The exercise identified key entry points for the integrated tracking of gender-sensitive indicators and targets. In close collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics, UN-Women also provided capacity development to key government institutions in indicator tracking and data collection with a focus on Goal 5 and gender-specific targets of the Goals.

61. UN-Women supported governments in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the implementation of their national sustainable development strategies. In the Dominican Republic, for example, UN-Women prepared reports on gender mainstreaming in public policies as well as methodological frameworks for how individual government institutions could mainstream a gender perspective in their plans, projects and programmes. As a result of this work, four line ministries, including the ministries of finance; economy, planning and development; women; and public administration, as well as eight national institutions, signed an inter-institutional coordination agreement that has the principal objective of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the implementation of the national development strategy 2030. In the agreement, UN-Women is assigned a key role in supporting the inter-institutional commission in its role of ensuring results are achieved.

V. Conclusions

62. In 2017, UN-Women placed a high priority on providing normative support to intergovernmental processes and bodies. In this context, the Entity worked with Security Council members in facilitating a more systematic approach to their work on women, peace and security, in response to resolution 2242 (2015). UN-Women continued to expand its collaboration with mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, such as its special procedures. The Entity built on its previous effective engagement in support of the development of global compacts on refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration.

63. The normative aspects of UN-Women work were pivotal in strengthening gender-responsive actions to address climate change and desertification, with the new

gender action plans adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification constituting major achievements towards gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the respective conventions. Going forward, UN-Women will continue its critical engagement in this area to support parties in mainstreaming a gender perspective in all aspects of their work.

64. Throughout the year, the Entity's normative support to accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda remained at the forefront of its efforts. With UN-Women normative support, advocacy and engagement, Member States made important normative gains in strengthening global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission at its sixty-first session on women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work make an important contribution to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. The commitment of Member States in the ministerial declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development should result in greater policy coherence between efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and sustainable development. The increased attention given to gender perspectives by several functional commissions further amplify this potential.

65. As the Commission on the Status of Women is expected to make a recommendation, at its sixty-second session, on how best to utilize the year 2020 to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women, going forward, UN-Women will comprehensively leverage its mandate as a composite entity to support Member States and other stakeholders in achieving concrete results for women and girls everywhere.

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Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the present report, the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls are examined in the context of the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1). The prevailing gender inequalities in rural areas that compromise the livelihoods, well-being and resilience of rural women and girls are also examined. The challenges and opportunities facing rural women and girls are addressed in terms of realizing their rights to an adequate standard of living, to a life free of violence and harmful practices and to land and productive assets, food security and nutrition, education and health, inclusive of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Policies and actions to achieve gender equality and rural women's and girls' empowerment and human rights are outlined in the report, and the need is expressed for greater commitment to ensuring that no rural woman or girl is left behind. Recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women are set out in the final section of the report.

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I. Introduction

1. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its sixty-second session, in 2018, will consider the priority theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls", in accordance with its multi-year programme of work for the period 2017–2019. The theme is addressed in the present report in terms of the realization of the human rights of rural women and girls everywhere, which are necessary for their livelihoods, well-being and resilience. This is particularly urgent given that virtually every gender and development indicator for which data are available reveals that, globally, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women.[1] Those rights are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

2. The empowerment of rural women and girls and the realization of their human rights and gender equality are essential to the achievement of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals therein. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (Goal 5) in rural areas around the globe is clearly linked to all other Goals and targets, including ending poverty in all its forms (Goal 1), eradicating hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture (Goal 2), achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all (Goal 8) and taking action to combat climate change (Goal 13). These Goals and targets encompass a number of rights that are essential to the livelihoods, well-being and resilience of rural women and girls in both developing and developed countries. Such rights include the right to land and land tenure security; to food and nutrition of adequate quality and quantity; to live a life free of all forms of violence, discrimination and harmful practices; to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights; and to quality, affordable and accessible education throughout the life cycle.

3. The 20-year review in 2015 of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action brought renewed attention to the urgency of eradicating poverty and improving the livelihoods, well-being and resilience of rural women and girls. It highlighted the need to realize the human rights of rural women and girls by eliminating geographic and gender inequalities in access to essential services and infrastructure, productive resources, land tenure security, food security and nutrition and income security and social protection (see E/CN.6/2015/3). Those issues were also addressed by the Commission at its sixtieth and sixty-first sessions (see E/2016/27 and E/2017/27).

4. Other recent normative advances, including the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (see FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1), the New Urban Agenda (General Assembly resolution 71/256) and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (Assembly resolution 71/1), contribute to the improvement of the situation of rural women and girls.

[1] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *State of Food and Agriculture: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security* (Rome, 2016), p. 49.

5. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women (CEDAW/C/GC/34), called upon States to uphold those rights. The Committeee emphasized that rural women faced structural barriers to the full enjoyment of their human rights, which were overlooked or incompletely addressed in laws, policies, budgets, investments and interventions at all levels across countries. It noted that rural women tended to be excluded from leadership and decision-making and were disproportionately affected by poverty and unequal access to land and natural resources, infrastructure and services and decent work and social protection. It also noted that the contribution of the paid and unpaid work of rural women and girls to gross domestic product and sustainable development was only partially recognized. Because of prevailing discriminatory gender norms, rural women and girls tended to be less educated than men and boys, with less access to information, skills, training and labour markets, while facing greater risks of violence, child, early and forced marriage and harmful practices. Those conditions were exacerbated by rural women's and girls' limited access to justice and lack of effective legal, juridical and institutional remedies, especially in cases of conflicting statutory and customary laws, authorities and jurisdictions.

6. Rural women and girls face multiple and intersecting inequalities and forms of discrimination as young women and girls, older women, heads of households, indigenous women, women affected by HIV/AIDS, women with disabilities and migrants, refugees and internally-displaced persons, and may be particularly subject to violence and exclusion. Their circumstances also vary according to their location, income, race/ethnicity, culture and sexual orientation and gender identity. That complexity influences their decision-making power and exercise of voice and agency and enables or constrains their access to land and productive resources, food security and nutrition and education and health services. Different groups of rural women and girls have particular needs and priorities, warranting tailored policy and institutional responses.

7. Achieving the Goals and realizing the human rights of rural women and girls require renewed commitments, increased investments and significantly greater financing from all sources, including official development assistance and national Governments. Effective macroeconomic policies should manage the impact of international investment and trade rules that compromise rural women's and girls' smallholder agricultural production and food security and nutrition. Legal and policy reforms should strengthen rural women's and girls' land rights and land tenure security and their equitable access to productive resources and markets and encourage urban-rural interaction and connectivity. Fiscal policies that facilitate investment in essential infrastructure (sustainable energy, sustainable transport and safely managed water and sanitation), services (care, education, health, including sexual and reproductive health, and prevention and response to violence against women and girls) and universal social protection will improve livelihoods, well-being and resilience while reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work. Targeted labour market policies should support the creation of decent jobs with living wages and rural women's agricultural and non-agricultural employment. Technological innovations can facilitate rural women's and girls' digital fluency, financial literacy and skills development and support their labour market entry and livelihoods. Taken together, such measures contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

8. The present report reflects the findings of the expert group meeting on theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of

rural women and girls", convened by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) from 20 to 22 September 2017 in Rome. The report is informed by General Assembly resolution 72/148, and the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas (A/72/207) and by recent research and data from United Nations entities and other sources.

II. Attaining the right to an adequate standard of living

9. A decade after the onset of the financial, food and climate crises, rural areas continue to be affected by slow or stagnant economic growth, unstable food prices and demand, extreme weather events, worsening political and violent conflicts and humanitarian crises. As of 2016, less than half of the world's population (46 per cent) was rural, owing to the dynamics of urbanization and migration in the context of climate change, environmental degradation (deforestation, desertification and loss of agricultural biodiversity) and unsustainable agricultural and land use practices.[2] The globalization of agrifood chains and large-scale domestic and foreign investment in land and biofuels present new risks for rural women and men and demand new responses.[3]

10. Owing to gender and geographic inequalities, rural women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty, exclusion and the effects of environmental and climate change. The majority of the 1 billion people who continue to live in unacceptable conditions of poverty and food insecurity are heavily concentrated in rural areas and are predominantly smallholder farmers and agricultural and informal workers with little or no social protection. Persistent barriers to accessing information, technology, financing and markets — in particular in the context of a changing climate with concomitant droughts, floods, land degradation and water scarcity — pose risks for agricultural productivity and food security. This is especially the case for women farmers, who may be as productive and enterprising as their male counterparts, but are even less able to access land, credit, agricultural inputs, climate and weather information, markets and high-value agrifood chains, compromising their productivity and incomes.[4] Policies and investments are needed to close such gender gaps in agriculture and the rural economy to end poverty and hunger and combat climate change (Goals 1, 2 and 13).

11. Women's employment in agriculture remains significant, although it has declined considerably over the past two decades as women transition to work in the manufacturing and service sectors. Globally, almost one third of employed women work in agriculture, including forestry and fishing, but that figure may exclude self-employed and unpaid family workers. Yet differences across countries and regions are striking. The share of women workers employed in agriculture is only 9.5 per cent in upper-middle income countries and 2.6 per cent in high income countries, while agriculture remains the most important employment sector for women in low income and lower-middle income countries. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women's

[2] World Bank estimates for 2016. Available from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS.

[3] International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), *Rural Development Report 2016: Fostering Inclusive Rural Transformation* (Rome, 2016).

[4] Ibid.

employment in agriculture has fallen to about 10 per cent, but in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over 60 per cent of all working women remain employed in agriculture, concentrated in time- and labour-intensive, informal and poorly paid activities with little social protection or income security.[5]

12. The majority of rural jobs for women are in the informal economy, whether in the plantation sector and global agrifood chains or in increasingly important non-farm employment. Rural women workers also include those who have migrated within and across national borders, trafficked workers and those in forced labour and debt bondage. Child labour is prevalent in rural areas and girls form a significant part of the agricultural workforce. In general, the right of rural women and girls to an adequate standard of living is jeopardized by ubiquitous low-paid, low-quality jobs, widespread casualization, poor working conditions, limited access to social protection and the lack of collective voice and agency as organized workers. They are often not covered by international or national labour standards in law or practice.[6] Gender discrimination and occupational segregation perpetuate the gender pay gap and inhibit upward mobility for rural women workers. The pay gap between men and women doing the same work can be as high as 40 per cent.[7] In line with Goal 8, improving the quality and quantity of decent jobs with social protection and freedom of association must be a policy priority if poverty is to be eradicated and an adequate standard of living with empowerment and dignity is to be attained by rural women and girls.

13. While their contributions to rural economies and societies in both developing and developed countries may be increasingly recognized, rural women's and girls' rights and priorities remain insufficiently realized. Rural women are underrepresented in local and national institutions and governance mechanisms and tend to have less voice, agency and decision-making power in households and society more broadly. For example, in the majority of the 68 countries with data available, rural women were less likely than urban women to decide how their incomes would be spent.[8] Rural women and girls continue to perform multiple productive and reproductive roles in families and communities. Much of their labour remains unpaid and unrecognized, including disproportionate shares of unpaid care and domestic work, upon which their households and national economies depend.[9]

14. Analysis of time use surveys suggests that rural women generally spend more time on unpaid work than rural men and urban women and men, reflecting both gender inequalities and the lack of public investment in poor rural areas. Unpaid work includes care work (such as caring for children, the elderly and the ill), domestic work (such as cooking, cleaning and washing clothes), agricultural work (for example, in subsistence agriculture or on family farms) and tasks such as collecting water and fuel.[10] Emerging evidence suggests that girls spend more time on unpaid care and

[5] International Labour Organization (ILO), *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (Geneva, 2016); ILOSTAT, 2017.

[6] ILO, "Decent work on plantations" (Geneva, 2017); ILO, *Freedom of Association for Women Rural Workers* (Geneva, 2012).

[7] FAO, IFAD and ILO, *Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: Differentiated Pathways out of Poverty — Status, Trends and Gaps* (Rome, 2010).

[8] UN-Women analysis of data from the Demographic and Health Surveys Programme "STATcompiler". Data available from www.statcompiler.com/en/ (accessed November 2017).

[9] IFAD, *Rural Development Report 2016: Fostering Inclusive Rural Transformation*.

[10] Jacques Charmes, "Time use across the world: findings of a world compilation of time use surveys", United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report Office Background Paper (UNDP, 2015); Debbie Budlender, ed. *Time Use Studies and Unpaid Care Work* (New York, Routledge, 2010).

domestic work and less time on paid work than boys in rural areas.[11] Public policies and investments are needed to capture the contributions of rural women's and girls' unpaid work to national economies and to promote gender equality by recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work. In line with 5.4, that entails investments in infrastructure and services (sustainable transport, sustainable energy, safely managed water and sanitation, childcare, eldercare and health care) and policies that support the transformation of discriminatory gender norms and practices in the household and society.

15. Improving access to productive resources and financial services, including credit, loans and saving schemes, is vital for low-income self-employed rural women and smallholder farmers. Incentives can be created to facilitate rural women's access to markets through public procurement and having them provision school meal programmes and provide other services. Well-designed and regulated microfinance and financial services provided by the non-profit sector, as well as gender-responsive financial products and delivery offered by some financial institutions and rural banks, can enhance rural women's economic security. Their success largely depends on the integration of different kinds of support and services, including training and skills development, mentorship and solidarity, and engagement with the wider community, which promote rural women's rights, empowerment and ability to shape related policies and practices.[12]

16. Increased connectivity and mobile phone technology can provide women farmers with information about weather and climate, crop prices and market conditions. Together with mobile banking, they are credited with fomenting rural women's enterprises in many countries. Similarly, in the sustainable energy sector, rapidly declining costs for renewable energy technologies have allowed growing numbers of rural women to earn an income by selling solar lighting, improved cookstoves and other clean energy equipment in remote, off-grid locations. The acquisition of such devices by rural women has had multiple benefits, ranging from allowing children and others to study and read at night to reducing household air pollution and the associated harmful health impacts by cooking with clean cookstoves and fuels.

17. Beyond such small-scale activities, decentralized sustainable energy solutions can be very significant in supporting the livelihoods, well-being and climate resilience of rural women and girls. Rural women's enterprises and cooperatives are becoming involved in installing and managing decentralized mini-grids, powered by solar — or other forms of renewable energy, that supply electricity for both household and productive uses in rural areas that are not served by national electricity grids. Solar-powered pumps provide water for irrigation and have the potential to ensure crop yields and food security for women farmers in different geographical settings and climatic conditions. Solar dryers, microhydro grain mills, solar grinders and solar refrigeration systems are important technologies for agrifood processing, storage and adding value to products. They help to decrease food waste and improve food security, while reducing the labour and time spent, for example, by women in manual processing and collecting water. To realize these benefits, women farmers and rural women's enterprises and cooperatives need support in a number of ways, including

[11] Leyla Karimli and others, "Factors and norms influencing unpaid care work: household survey evidence from five rural communities in Colombia, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Uganda and Zimbabwe" (Oxfam, 2017).

[12] ILO, Women at Work: Trends 2016; UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015).

through appropriate technology transfer, credit and financing and information and training to acquire, manage and use sustainable energy technologies.

18. Extending social protection to all rural women and girls can help them to attain an adequate standard of living. A universal social protection floor, as a human right, ensures basic income security and access to services, especially health care. Public works programmes, guaranteed rural employment schemes and conditional cash transfers are important in situations of social, economic or environmental crisis or chronic unemployment. Instituted as temporary measures, they may turn into more permanent sources of income. Guaranteed rural employment schemes that are designed with gender equality in wages and that take into account women's dual responsibility for reproductive and productive work can benefit rural women more than incomes as agricultural labourers, especially if on-site childcare, reduced work times and less physically demanding tasks are provided for women. Conditional cash transfers, which are predicated on compliance with minimum requirements, including with respect to children's school attendance, regular health care visits and improved family nutrition, have more lasting benefits if support services and training for rural women are provided and if payments are directly deposited into their bank accounts.[13]

19. Rural women's civil society organizations, enterprises and cooperatives are critical in gathering and uniting rural women, supporting their voice, agency and representation in the political and economic spheres, claiming their rights and allowing them to influence the decisions and institutions that affect their lives and livelihoods. Rural women in producer cooperatives can pool their labour, resources, assets and knowledge, thereby increasing their bargaining power to better access and use financing, technology and markets, including through fair trade networks. Rural women's cooperatives can more effectively participate in local markets, supply chains and government procurement, with the potential for greater incomes for their members than for women who are not similarly organized.[14] Rural women's enterprises and cooperatives can also provide social and care services to compensate for the lack of social protection coverage in rural areas.[15]

III. Ensuring the rights of rural women to land and land tenure security

20. For rural women and men, rights to land and natural resources are fundamental, and land is perhaps the most important household asset. Yet women farmers have significantly less access to, control over and ownership of land and other productive assets compared with their male counterparts. The rights of rural women to land are compromised by inadequate legal and policy frameworks, ineffective implementation at the national and local levels and discriminatory gender norms and practices, which targets 5.1. and 5.a are aimed at redressing.

21. Agricultural censuses and household surveys have provided only incomplete sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on women's ownership, use and control of land and agricultural holdings. The FAO Gender and Land Rights Database, drawing on agricultural census data, indicates that less than 20 per cent of landholders

[13] UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016*.

[14] High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, "Leave no one behind: a call to action for gender equality and women's economic empowerment" (2016).

[15] ILO, *Women at Work: Trends 2016*; ILO, *Providing Care through Cooperatives: Survey and Interview Findings* (Geneva, 2016).

worldwide are women, although there are wide regional variations. Based on data for 161 countries, only in 37 per cent of those countries do women and men have equal rights to own, use and control land. In 59 per cent of those countries, while the law guarantees women and men the same rights, customary and religious practices often discriminate against women and undermine the full implementation of national legal codes. In the remaining 4 per cent of those countries, women explicitly have no legal right to own, use or control land.[16]

22. The land rights of rural women encompass ownership, control, access and use of land and its resources in diverse land tenure systems, including community, customary, collective, joint and individual tenure. Not only do women have fewer land rights than men, but they are often restricted to so-called secondary land rights, meaning that they hold rights through male family members and risk losing those rights in the case of divorce, widowhood or the migration of the male relative. The land rights of most women are curtailed by customary law even when recognized by statutory law or as part of legal reforms. Women are susceptible to dispossession because they lack inheritance rights; when a male spouse dies, the rights of his male relatives often prevail over those of his widow. Women rarely have full and direct rights to land, but must negotiate as secondary claimants through a male relative.[17]

23. In many countries, rural land is often undocumented, making it highly vulnerable to land grabs and expropriation and making local communities vulnerable to dispossession and displacement with little or no compensation. The lack of effective and transparent land governance means that customary, communal and individual land rights are unregistered, unrecognized and unprotected in the face of the large-scale land acquisitions associated with foreign direct investment in recent years, which threaten to jeopardize local agricultural livelihoods and food security. Women farmers, in particular, are disproportionately affected by large-scale land grabs and dispossession because of their unequal access and control over land and productive assets, coupled with limited mobility and decision-making power in the household and the community (see A/69/156).

24. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States set out seven targets and six indicators on land rights and land tenure security across the Goals, progress against which is to be measured and monitored through sex-disaggregated data. Three indicators are particularly relevant to women's land rights and land tenure security: indicator 1.4.2, on secure land rights; indicator 5.a.1, on rights over agricultural land; and indicator 5.a.2, on legal frameworks, including customary law, that guarantee women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control over land.

25. The land tenure security of rural women can be strengthened through gender-responsive legal reforms, asset transfer programmes and land titling. The reform of inheritance and marital laws that discriminate against women and girls is central. Marital regimes with joint or common property, as opposed to those with separation of property, tend to favour women's land rights, as do equal inheritance rights for daughters and sons. Asset transfer programmes that allocate land to women-headed households or make provisions for land titling in the names of women or joint titling

[16] FAO Gender and Land Rights Database. Available from www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/en/; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Social Institutions and Gender Index. Available from www.genderindex.org.

[17] Carmen Diana Deere and others, "Women's land ownership and participation in agricultural decision-making: evidence from Ecuador, Ghana and Karnataka, India", Research Brief Series, No. 2 (Bangalore, Indian Institute of Management, 2013); FAO, "Gender and land rights," Economic and Social Perspectives, policy brief No. 8 (Rome, 2010).

in the names of couples may increase women's land tenure security and allow them to access credit and other productive resources. Collective land tenure or ownership by women's organizations or farmer cooperatives is another means to increase access by women to, ownership of and control over land and related production.[18]

26. Because of complex and overlapping land tenure and governance systems at the local and national levels, land reforms are difficult to plan and implement. Gender-responsive land laws, policies, regulations and procedures need to be supported by the voice, agency and representation of women at all levels of governance, including parliaments, administrative services and land committees. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security can be an effective tool to advance rural women's land rights and land tenure security. Rural women's organizations, together with gender equality advocates in Government and civil society, can help raise women's legal literacy and awareness of their entitlements and redress discriminatory social norms. Such organizations have mobilized effectively to pursue legal, policy, institutional and social reforms in favour of women's land rights in countries worldwide, although the evidence is mixed regarding the ongoing impact of their results.[19]

27. Ensuring women's rights to land and other productive resources is correlated with improved household welfare and a broad range of benefits for rural women and girls. Women acquire more decision-making power and economic independence in their families, households and communities. The elimination of laws and practices that disadvantage women compared with men with respect to access to land, property and other productive resources could also help to reduce intimate partner violence.[20] Secure land tenure increases the social and political status of women and offers an avenue to economic justice. By diminishing the threats of displacement, dispossession, food insecurity and poverty, secure land rights and land tenure can boost women's bargaining power in the home and strengthen their participation in economic and public life.

IV. Strengthening food security and nutrition for rural women and girls

28. The fulfilment of the right of rural women and girls to food and nutrition of adequate quality and quantity is critical. Yet rural women and girls continue to suffer from food insecurity and malnutrition, with the number of chronically undernourished people increasing globally, in large part owing to conflicts, humanitarian crises and climate-related shocks, such as droughts or floods. Food security has deteriorated in commodity export-dependent countries, where steep declines in export and fiscal revenues in recent years have resulted in reduced imports and fiscal capacity to protect poor households from rising domestic food prices. Globally, women are

[18] Abena Oduro, "Control and ownership of assets: a means for increasing gender equality and empowerment of rural women". Background paper for the expert group meeting of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, (2017); UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016*.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Lori L. Heise and Andreas Kotsadam, "Cross-national and multilevel correlates of partner violence: an analysis of data from population-based surveys," *The Lancet Global Health*, vol. 3, No. 6 (June 2015), pp. e332–e340. Available from http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(15)00013-3.

slightly more likely to experience food insecurity than men. Although the proportion is declining, nearly one of every four children worldwide is stunted, which increases the risks of impaired cognitive ability, poor school and work performance and death from infections. A third of women of reproductive age worldwide suffer from anaemia, threatening their own health and their children's nutrition and health.[21]

29. In this context, nutritional empowerment, which focuses on quality nutrition for the survival and well-being of women and their children, becomes key. Interventions to enhance agricultural and food production do not always translate into improved nutritional outcomes. In particular, development interventions promoting the economic empowerment of women that focus exclusively on income-generating opportunities and increasing agricultural productivity may inadvertently increase the work burden of rural women (both on farm and off-farm, paid and unpaid), thereby undermining their health and nutrition. Nutritional empowerment entails assessing the structural factors, constraints and norms that may prevent rural women from achieving adequate nutritional outcomes and providing targeted policy responses to improve their nutritional security and health.[22]

30. In the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goal 2, Member States addressed the structural barriers that place rural women and girls at a disadvantage in their realization of food security and nutrition. A recent assessment of progress indicates, however, that it is unlikely that hunger and malnutrition will be eradicated by 2030 unless more coordinated efforts and greater investments are made to respond effectively to food crises around the world. Doing so would entail expanding decent work and social protection in rural areas, increasing agricultural productivity and smallholder incomes, supporting smallholder sustainable agriculture and food production systems and conserving and equitably sharing the benefits of agricultural biodiversity. It would also entail negotiating trade rules that protect domestic policy space for agricultural development and food security, while prioritizing women's empowerment and gender equality (see A/72/303).

31. Rural women farmers are increasingly engaged in sustainable agriculture, practicing agroecological and climate-resilient agricultural methods for food security and nutrition. For that to come to fruition, they need to be formally recognized as producers in their own right and to participate in decision-making in producer cooperatives, land governance and water management committees. It is crucial that rural women be empowered to convene and participate in local and national policy dialogues and engage with decision-makers. Public and private investment in rural women's producer organizations is necessary to enable climate-resilient and diversified production and commercialization of crops. Local and national funding mechanisms need to be established to promote rural women's organic farming and agroecological methods. These include ancestral, indigenous and modern technological practices that are climate-resilient and protect ecosystems and agricultural biodiversity and that strengthen food security and nutrition.[23]

[21] FAO, IFAD, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme and World Health Organization (WHO), *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017: Building Resilience for Peace and Food Security* (Rome, 2017).

[22] Sudha Narayanan and others, "Rural women's empowerment in nutrition: a proposal for diagnostics linking food, health and institutions". Background paper for the expert group meeting of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2017).

[23] Huairou Commission, "Rural women's empowerment in the sustainable development era", (2017).

V. Addressing violence and harmful practices against rural women and girls

32. Violence against women and girls is a significant human rights violation in all countries, the elimination of which is highlighted in Goal 5, target 2. Violence occurs in private and public places and takes many forms. Globally, over one third of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner, or sexual violence from a non-partner, at some point in their lives.[24] Although data is not available for all countries, of the 48 countries with recent data on physical or sexual violence committed by a husband/partner in the past 12 months, 26 countries showed higher rates in rural areas than in urban areas.[25] In North America, the information available indicates that the rates of intimate partner violence tend to be similar in rural, urban and suburban areas, but some types of intimate partner violence (sexual, chronic and severe violence and homicide) may be higher in rural areas.[26]

33. The elimination of harmful practices in rural areas (target 5.3) is also difficult to gauge because of incomplete data. Despite an overall decline in the prevalence of female genital mutilation over the past three decades, it is still practiced in 29 countries concentrated in Africa and the Middle East, and, given migration flows, affects girls and women worldwide. An estimated 200 million women and girls, 44 million of whom are under 15 years of age, have been subjected to the practice, in most countries before the age of 5. In 22 of the 29 countries, female genital mutilation may be more common in rural areas, based on data on girls and women 15 to 49 years of age. For girls under 14 years of age, as reported by their mothers, the practice may also be more common in rural areas than urban areas in 15 of the 20 countries with data available. More support for the continuation of female genital mutilation appears to exist in rural areas, although there is wide variation among countries with respect to the extent of support for the practice.[27]

34. The incidence of child, early and forced marriage has declined globally, but over 700 million women and 150 million men alive today were married as children. Each year, some 15 million girls are married before they reach 18 years of age, many of whom are from the poorest households in rural sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In Africa, the level of child marriage among the poorest has not changed since 1990, and the countries with the highest numbers of child marriages are in South Asia. Girls with little schooling are up to six times more likely to be married as children than girls with secondary education. Girls in the poorest 20 per cent of the population and those living in rural areas are the most at risk. Worldwide, rural girls are more likely to marry than their urban counterparts, with about twice as many rural child marriages as urban child marriages in some countries in West and Central Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean.[28]

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[24] *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8), chap. 6.

[25] UN-Women analysis of data from the Demographic and Health Surveys Programme "STATcompiler".

[26] Katie M. Edwards, "Intimate partner violence and the rural–urban–suburban divide: myth or reality? A critical review of the literature", *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, vol. 16, No. 3 (2015), pp. 359-373.

[27] UN-Women assessment of UNICEF data. Available from https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation-and-cutting/ (accessed November 2017); UNICEF, "Female genital mutilation/cutting: a global concern" (2016).

[28] UNICEF, "Ending child marriage: progress and prospects" (2014); UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 2016: A Fair Chance for Every Child* (New York, 2016).

35. Child and early marriage has clear implications for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls. These include a lack of information, adequate health care and decision-making power with regard to safe sex and family planning; early pregnancy and childbearing before girls' bodies are fully mature, with greater risks of complications, which are the second leading cause of death for girls between ages 15 and 19; and vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.[29] Child and early marriage also compromises the agency and mental well-being of women and girls and increases their vulnerability to domestic violence, in particular in the context of forced marriage.[30]

36. Large-scale public awareness and advocacy initiatives are needed across rural areas to change practices and attitudes in relation to intimate partner violence against women, child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation and should target women and girls as well as men and boys. Other preventative measures to address violence and harmful practices against women and girls include increasing access by girls and young people to education, empowering them with knowledge and skills and empowering parents and communities to abandon harmful practices. Economic incentives, such as conditional cash transfers, may be effective in reducing child marriage and child labour and in increasing girls' attendance in school. Strengthening and enforcing laws and policies against violence against women and harmful practices is critical, as is enacting and implementing laws that set the minimum age of marriage at 18 for both girls and boys. Rural women and girls who are subjected to violence and harmful practices must be assured access to essential social, health and justice services.[31] Mobile technologies have been helpful in some cases in creating remote help desks for rural women and girls who have suffered violence, and in alerting police officers and health workers who can investigate and provide emotional and medical support. Similarly, mobile hotlines help to support girls confronting female genital mutilation and, in both cases, can support the prosecution of crimes and the delivery of justice.[32]

VI. Ensuring access to health care and sexual and reproductive health and rights

37. Ensuring access to quality essential health-care services (Goal 3, target 8) and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (Goal 5, target 6) are necessary in order to realize the right of rural women and girls to the highest attainable standard of health. Distance from health facilities and qualified health professionals is a serious concern for rural women and girls. Inability to access health facilities is a more serious issue for women and girls in rural areas than in urban areas, as indicated by data available for 62 countries, in particular with respect to sexual and reproductive health. In the least developed countries, a rural woman is 38 per cent less likely than an urban woman to give birth with the assistance of a skilled health professional. Maternal deaths, many of which are preventable, are

[29] Ibid.

[30] Sama-Resource Group for Women and Health, "Dataspeak: early marriage and health" (2015).

[31] UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 2016*; UNICEF, "Ending child marriage"; UN-Women and others, "Essential services package for women and girls subject to violence" (2015).

[32] Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, "Working Group on Education: digital skills for life and work" (Paris, UNESCO, 2017); Health and Education Advice and Resource Team, "Helpdesk report: increasing access to sexual and reproductive health and rights via new innovations and technologies in Africa" (2015).

linked to inadequate health services for women and girls, in particular for the poorest and those living in rural areas.[33]

38. Death and disease associated with lack of access to safe and reliable water and sanitation disproportionately affect poor rural women and girls. Although 6.6 billion people had access to an improved drinking water source in 2015, the availability of safely managed drinking water remains low, at an estimated 68 per cent in urban areas and only 20 per cent in rural areas. The dearth of safely managed water and sanitation and the practice of open defecation occur primarily in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The poorest in rural areas suffer most, especially women and girls who are subject to adverse pregnancy outcomes, maternal mortality, violence and psychosocial stress. Menstrual hygiene management is also difficult in the absence of water, soap and sanitation facilities, whether at home, school or work. Achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and ending open defecation (Goal 6, targets 1 and 2) necessitates policies and programmes that prioritize rural women and girls and address critical geographical, gender and health inequalities.[34]

39. The lack of access to information and services relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights is particularly acute for rural women, especially young women and girls. Globally, the unmet need for family planning affects the lives of 214 million women in developing countries. Rural areas show greater unmet need than urban areas, according to data available for some 77 countries.[35] Multiple mobile health applications, for example those which support prenatal care, have helped in some instances to increase access by rural women and girls to information and services relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Mobile phone clinics and telemedicine consultations have been deployed in some countries to reach rural women and girls, and mobile learning platforms have been deployed to train health workers and professionals on relevant topics.[36] Rural women and girls need the resources and opportunity to manage their own sexual and reproductive health and exercise their reproductive rights, while being supported in a number of ways, including through comprehensive sexuality education. Otherwise, they will be at a great disadvantage when it comes to attaining an education, earning a living and enjoying a healthy and productive life.[37]

VII. Providing quality education for rural girls and women

40. Realizing the right of rural women and girls to quality, affordable and accessible education throughout the life cycle is at the core of attaining Goal 4. Despite the gains made in achieving gender parity in primary school enrolment in developing countries, much remains to be done to reach universal primary school completion, in particular in rural areas. Progress towards gender parity in school is offset by persistent gender-based discrimination and stereotypes in text books, curricula, teaching

[33] UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016*.

[34] Joanna Esteves Mills and Oliver Cumming, "The impact of water, sanitation and hygiene on key health and social outcomes: review of evidence" (UNICEF, 2016).

[35] WHO family planning/contraception fact sheet 2017. Available from www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs351/en/. UN-Women analysis of data from the Demographic and Health Surveys Programme "STATcompiler".

[36] Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, "Working Group on Education".

[37] Development Assistance Committee Network on Gender Equality, "Women's economic empowerment" (OECD, 2012).

methodologies, access to infrastructure, including information and communications technology (ICT), and practices and behaviours within and outside educational settings, all of which tend to be more pronounced in rural areas. The multiple and intersecting inequalities and forms of discrimination experienced by rural women and girls put them at great disadvantage in terms of schooling, literacy and adult education. Poverty and location are factors that determine whether girls go to school, with the poorest girls in rural areas at the greatest risk of exclusion from school. Of particular concern for rural girls is the persistent and widespread lack of qualified teachers in rural areas, especially when it comes to the preparation, recruitment and retention of women teachers (see A/72/207).

41. Ensuring access by rural women and girls to ICT may help to deliver skills, information and knowledge that they urgently need for their livelihoods, well-being and resilience. Even as mobile technologies become more prevalent, the digital divide remains a gendered one: most of the 3.9 billion people who are offline are in rural areas and are poorer, less educated and tend to be women and girls. The cost of owning and using a mobile phone is a significant barrier, in particular for women in rural areas of South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa. Although the use of ICT for learning has gained ground in schools worldwide, the digital divide may be particularly intractable in the case of mobile learning opportunities for poor rural girls. Many schools in rural areas lack both electricity and computers, and the situation is likely worse in terms of access to ICT outside school for rural girls in poor households that have neither. Mobile phones may be a more accessible alternative, but the evidence is not yet clear on the relative effectiveness of such devices to support learning and reduce gender disparities in primary and secondary education. [38]

42. Poor rural young women tend to be significantly less literate than the rural average. In the majority of countries with data, less than half of poor rural women have basic literacy skills. Mobile technologies can potentially enhance literacy, but multiple challenges must be addressed in order for rural women to engage in mobile learning. Access to mobile phones can be stymied by cost and complications relating to connectivity in remote rural areas, but sharing mobile phones could reduce costs and increase collaborative learning. More daunting are the discriminatory gender norms and practices that limit women's use of mobile phones for learning. Engaging men and the wider community and making mobile literacy content relevant to learners' communities and livelihoods in local languages may be helpful. [39] Greater and more systematic investments are called for to achieve universal free public primary and secondary education for all and to provide educational facilities in rural areas with qualified teachers at all levels of instruction.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

43. **Gender equality and the empowerment and human rights of rural women and girls are essential for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The fulfilment of the rights of rural women and girls to an adequate standard of living, to a life free of violence and harmful practices and to land and productive assets, food security and nutrition, decent work, education and health, inclusive of sexual and reproductive health and rights, is**

[38] UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: Gender Review* (Paris, 2016).

[39] Ibid.; Carolina Rekalcazar, *Mobile Phones & Literacy: Empowerment in Women's Hands* (Paris, UNESCO, 2015).

fundamental. Renewed commitments, improved policies and their rigorous implementation, and greater financing from all sources, including increased official development assistance, are required in order to leave no rural woman or girl behind.

44. Efforts need to be made by all stakeholders to support the livelihoods, well-being and resilience of rural women and girls and to eliminate structural barriers and discriminatory laws and gender norms to enable rural women and girls to respond to challenges and seize opportunities for change. Policies and programmes should promote the sustainable smallholder production of rural women and girls, as well as decent farm and non-farm work and access to social protection. Their unpaid work should be recognized and counted, and their unpaid care and domestic work reduced and redistributed through the provision of infrastructure and services. The rights of rural women and girls to land tenure security, food security and nutrition need to be supported and protected from economic, social and environmental shocks and stresses. Violence and harmful practices against rural women and girls must be eliminated. The delivery of safely managed water and sanitation, and education and health-care services, inclusive of sexual and reproductive health and rights, needs to be strengthened. The promise of ICT and sustainable energy technologies should be fulfilled, including through appropriate technology transfer. Support for rural women's civil society organizations, enterprises and cooperatives is critical in realizing the human rights and empowerment of rural women and girls and their effective participation in public debates and policy processes.

45. To achieve gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls and their human rights, the Commission on the Status of Women may wish to urge Governments and other stakeholders to take the action set out below.

Strengthen normative and legal frameworks and eliminate laws and policies that discriminate against rural women and girls

(a) Take action on existing commitments and obligations with respect to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls and their full enjoyment of all their human rights, which constitute an integrated framework that leaves no rural women or girls behind;

(b) Strengthen and enforce laws, policies and regulations that prohibit discrimination against rural women and girls; implement targeted measures to address the multiple and intersecting inequalities and marginalization they face as young women and girls, older women, heads of households, indigenous women, women affected by HIV/AIDS, women with disabilities and migrants, refugees and internally-displaced persons; and enhance gender-responsive rural development policies;

(c) Accelerate efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and harmful practices against rural women and girls, such as intimate partner violence, domestic violence and sexual violence, as well as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;

(d) Undertake legislative and administrative reforms to protect and promote the right of rural women and girls to land and land tenure security and ensure their equal access to and control over productive resources and assets, other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources and financial services and technology;

(e) Ensure the full and equal participation and leadership of rural women and girls in rural development and governance, including in decision-making at all levels, and strengthen coordination between national gender equality mechanisms and other governmental institutions and collaboration with non-governmental and civil society organizations;

(f) Promote access by rural women and girls to justice, legal remedies and legal support;

Implement economic and social policies for the empowerment of rural women and girls

(g) Pursue macroeconomic policies that support smallholder agricultural production and the food security and nutrition of rural women and girls and their communities by mitigating the negative impact of international investment and trade rules;

(h) Enact economic and social policies to eradicate rural poverty and support rural women's decent work and income security, climate-resilient agricultural production and food security and nutrition;

(i) Design and implement fiscal policies that promote gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls by investing in essential infrastructure (ICT, sustainable energy, sustainable transport and safely managed water and sanitation) and services (care, education, health, inclusive of sexual and reproductive health, and prevention and response to violence against women);

(j) Reprioritize fiscal expenditures to extend social protection coverage to all rural women and girls and establish social protection floors to ensure access to social protection for all;

(k) Ensure the right to work and rights at work of all rural women in the informal and formal economies, and that all rural women workers are equally protected by international labour standards and national labour laws;

(l) Implement and enforce laws and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in agricultural and non-agricultural employment in rural areas;

(m) Eliminate policies and practices that condone forced labour, trafficked labour and child labour in rural areas;

(n) Undertake targeted measures to recognize and measure unpaid work performed by rural women and girls and reduce and redistribute their disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work through the equal sharing of responsibilities with rural men and boys and the provision of infrastructure (sustainable energy, sustainable transport and safely managed water and sanitation), technology and public services (accessible and quality childcare and care facilities for other dependants);

(o) Systematically measure and incorporate the value of unpaid work performed by rural women and girls, including unpaid care and domestic work, in the calculation of gross domestic product and the formulation of economic and social policies;

(p) **Facilitate the entry of rural women, especially young women, into the labour force by improving their skills, including their financial and digital literacy;**

(q) **Increase the share of trade and procurement from rural women's enterprises and cooperatives, and foster their access to local, national and international markets;**

(r) **Strengthen the capacity of rural women and girls to respond to economic, political and social shocks, conflicts and humanitarian crises by providing essential infrastructure, services, decent work and social protection;**

(s) **Build the resilience of rural women and girls to climate change and environmental degradation (deforestation, desertification and loss of agricultural biodiversity) by strengthening access to financing, sustainable energy and other technologies, information and social protection;**

(t) **Increase financial investments in quality, affordable and accessible health-care facilities and support services for rural women and girls; take measures to reduce maternal mortality rates in rural areas and increase access to quality care before, during and after childbirth; and provide comprehensive sexuality education;**

(u) **Ensure universal access by rural women and girls to sexual and reproductive health and their reproductive rights, including health-care services for family planning, and fulfil their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality free of coercion, discrimination and violence;**

(v) **Strengthen HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care in rural areas, including health and social services for rural women and girls;**

(w) **Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure the full and equal participation of rural women and girls in and their completion of quality education (primary, secondary, vocational and technical), expand the scope of ICT-enabled mobile learning and literacy training and provide good school infrastructure and quality teachers in rural areas;**

(x) **Increase the capacity of national statistical offices and other relevant institutions to collect, analyse and disseminate sex- and age-disaggregated data and produce gender statistics to support policies and action for rural women and girls and to monitor and track progress towards the Goals;**

Strengthen the collective voice, leadership and decision-making of rural women and girls

(y) **Ensure that rural women and girls and their organizations fully and actively participate in the decisions, policies and institutions that affect their livelihoods, well-being and resilience;**

(z) **Protect the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining to enable rural women workers, including informal and migrant workers, to organize and join unions and participate in economic decision-making and policy formulation;**

(aa) **Support the effective participation, decision-making and leadership of rural women in women's enterprises, farmers' organizations, producer cooperatives and other civil society organizations;**

(bb) **Provide opportunties for rural girls and young women to form their own organzations to exercise voice, agency and leadership;**

46. **The Commission may wish to call upon the United Nations system and other international organizations, including international financial institutions, to work collaboratively to support Member States in implementing, measuring and monitoring the foregoing recommendations at all levels.**

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review theme: participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women

Review of the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report reviews and assesses the extent to which Member States have implemented the agreed conclusions from the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women on "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women". The report summarizes the progress, gaps and challenges relating to action taken at the national level in implementing the agreed conclusions. The current review takes place against a rapidly changing environment in information and communications technology and media, and subsequent to the World Summit on the Information Society and its review, as well as the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report reflects on related normative developments and actions around their implementation and emerging issues.

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I. Introduction

1. At the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States agreed on new working methods for the Commission (see Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/6), which included a more rigorous review of the agreed conclusions relating to a priority theme from a previous session in order to encourage the implementation of its outcomes. As part of the review process, the Commission will consider a report on progress made on the theme at the national level.

2. The review theme of the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-second session, in 2018, is "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women". The Commission had adopted agreed conclusions on that theme at its forty-seventh session, in 2003 (E/2003/27-E/CN.6/2003/12).

3. The agreed conclusions strengthened the global normative framework on those issues and contributed to the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. They also informed subsequent deliberations and agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women by addressing links between respective priority themes and information and communications technology (ICT) (see, for example, E/2011/27-E/CN.6/2011/12). They also influenced other key normative developments, such as the World Summit on the Information Society (in 2003 and 2005) and more recently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. The present report assesses the extent to which Member States have implemented the agreed conclusions in the following areas: strategies and policies for women's participation in the digital revolution and media sector, and applications for women's empowerment; education, literacy and skills development for girls and women on ICT and media; the promotion of women in ICT and media sectors, including in decision-making; and strengthening the evidence base.

5. The report draws on information received from Member States[1] and other sources, including the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society, reports of the Secretary-General prepared for related priority and review themes of the Commission, and national reports submitted as part of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of its adoption.[2] The present report will be accompanied by presentations by Member States, from different regions, on a voluntary basis, of lessons learned, challenges and best practice, at the sixty-second session of the Commission.

II. Context for the implementation of the agreed conclusions

6. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions in 2003, the landscape of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the context of the digital revolution and

[1] The following contributed inputs for this report: Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Brunei Darussalam, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czechia, El Salvador, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Romania, Slovenia, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe.

[2] Available from www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations and E/CN.6/2015/3.

media has evolved considerably. In the current digital age, ICT[3] penetrates almost all aspects of life, transforming sectors and influencing interaction, learning, access to services and enjoyment of human rights. Such technology has afforded new avenues for participation in political life and the economy. The digital world has created new avenues for mobilization and change[4] and created innovative forms of services, such as mobile money and digital financial inclusion.[5] It also enables life-enhancing opportunities around health, education and employment. Given the transformative potential, access to digital technologies and the qualitative aspects of their application and impact have gained greater importance and created new demands around skill development.

7. One major development not anticipated in the agreed conclusions was the birth and extraordinary spread of online platforms and social media and how those would transform the way news and other content is developed, shared and consumed. The digital age enables women journalists to develop an online presence that is liberated from newsroom hierarchies and allows citizen journalists and activists to access modes of mass communication in ways that were previously unthinkable.[6] Individual women can make their voices heard, exchange views and create their own, often sizeable audiences; more than half of social media users are women.[7] As the preeminent forum focused on gender equality and women's empowerment and rights, the Commission on the Status of Women is a case in point of the demand-driven growth of social media audiences: social media coverage of the Commission's work in 2012 reached 8 million users; by 2017, the audience reached with news and updates on the Commission had grown to 170 million.

8. There is also, however, a growing awareness that in the digital revolution, despite its potential, the distribution of its benefits is not evenly, nor automatically, felt.[8] Progress can reflect, or be impeded by, offline gender inequalities, discrimination and violence. In addition, progress for some women through digital opportunities does not necessarily translate into transformative change for all women and girls.

9. The data on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the digital age reflect this reality. There is thus a need to increase targeted digital literacy and skill development efforts that enable women and girls to develop the capacities necessary

[3] ICT includes infrastructure (e.g., Internet and devices), content, products and services (e.g., social media platforms, digital media content, mobile, web-based and offline applications, data, artificial intelligence and machine learning and the Internet of things) and offline uses (e.g., three-dimensional printing, robotics and automation).

[4] See, for example, World Pulse, a social network for women's empowerment, information available from www.worldpulse.com/en/about-us/impact. See also the publication *Global Information Society Watch 2013: Women's Rights, Gender and ICTs* (Association for Progressive Communications and Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos), 2013), available from http://giswatch.org/2013-womens-rights-gender-and-icts.

[5] GSMA, "Connected women: mapping the mobile money gender gap — insights from Côte d'Ivoire and Mali", April 2017. Available from www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/programme/connected-women/mapping-the-mobile-money-gender-gap-our-insights-from-cote-divoire-and-mali.

[6] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "World trends in freedom of expression and media development: global report 2017/2018", (Paris, 2017), available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002597/259756e.pdf.

[7] Monica Anderson, "Men catch up with women on overall social media use", Pew Research Center, 25 August 2015. Available from www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/08/28/men-catch-up-with-women-on-overall-social-media-use.

[8] World Bank, World Development Report 2016 — Digital Dividends, (Washington, D.C., 2016).

to safely navigate, benefit from and, of even greater importance, contribute to the digital revolution. Such measures should be part of a comprehensive approach to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and their human rights.

10. Figures broadly show that while progress has been made in more widespread access to ICT, including the Internet and mobile phones, the gender gap is in fact widening, as acknowledged by Member States in General Assembly resolution 70/125. In 2016, the global rate of Internet user penetration was 12 per cent lower for women than men, and the gender gap is even larger in the least developed countries, at 31 per cent (see E/2017/66). There is also a gender gap in the use of ICT for empowerment purposes, as data show that between 30 and 50 per cent of women are less likely to use the Internet for economic and political empowerment.[9]

11. The development and application of digital products and services that advance women's empowerment also lag behind. The Women's Rights Online project gave an average score of 4/10 on availability of relevant content and services for women.[10] At the same time, it found that civil society and women themselves are stepping in to create relevant applications.

12. New and emerging threats also have to be addressed, which range from pervasive forms of cyberviolence and harassment against women and girls,[11] to the perpetuation of gender bias in machine learning and artificial intelligence.[12] The online media world also provides channels for entrenching negative social norms and representation of women.[13] Women journalists are experiencing online abuse, stalking and harassment.[14] A World Wide Web Foundation study found that 74 per cent of countries are not doing enough to stop online violence.[15]

13. In order for women to fully benefit from the digital revolution, they need to be equally represented in the workforce and in enterprise and leadership positions in sectors linked to ICT. Such technology is increasingly central to women's economic empowerment, with predictions that 90 per cent of future jobs will require ICT

[9] International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO, "Doubling digital opportunities: enhancing the inclusion of women and girls in the information society", Geneva, 2013, available from www.broadbandcommission.org/documents/working-groups/bb-doubling-digital-2013.pdf; see also GSMA Connected Women programme research available from www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/programmes/connected-women; see further World Wide Web Foundation, "Women's rights online: translating access into empowerment", global report, October 2015, pp. 13 and 31.

[10] World Wide Web Foundation, "Women's rights online: report cards". Available from http://webfoundation.org/docs/2016/09/WRO-Gender-Report-Card_Overview.pdf.

[11] Maeve Duggan, "Online harassment", Pew Research Center study, 22 October 2014. Available from www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/; and the extensive work of the Association of Progressive Communications (apc.org).

[12] For example, see www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/csw_map.pdf. On bias in machine algorithms see Tom Simonite, "Machines taught by photos learn a sexist view of women", Wired, 21 August 2017, available from www.wired.com/story/machines-taught-by-photos-learn-a-sexist-view-of-women/; and Claire Cain Miller, "When algorithms discriminate", *New York Times*, 9 July 2015, available from www.nytimes.com/2015/07/10/upshot/when-algorithms-discriminate.html?_r=0.

[13] See www.takebackthetech.net.

[14] UNESCO, "World trends in freedom of expression and media development".

[15] See http://thewebindex.org/report/.

skills.[16] The Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment stressed the importance of digital skill development in the context of the future of work and the fourth industrial revolution, and such skills are also seen as part of a set of new skills for the twenty-first century[17] and an important component of the education agenda.[18]

14. However, the progress of women's employment and leadership in ICT and media sectors has been slow or stagnated since the adoption of the agreed conclusions in 2003. Globally, studies show a precipitous drop of women in ICT as they progress from secondary school, to university, to employment, and then to retention and promotion.[19] Women make up only around 20 per cent of ICT workforce in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). They hold on average 12 per cent of decision-making positions, and constitute only 7 per cent of partners in the top venture funding firms.[20] In media, women remain heavily underrepresented in the workforce globally and in decision-making roles. They make up only 1 in 4 of decision makers in media, 1 in 3 reporters and 1 in 5 experts interviewed.[21] The film and advertising industries echo equally low participation of women. Progress in the representation of women through the media also remains limited. Women are the central focus of only 10 per cent of news stories, exactly the same figure as in 2000. The proportion of news that challenges gender stereotypes also remains largely the same, at just 4 per cent. The ambition of critical area of concern J, women and the media, of the Beijing Platform for Action, to increase women's participation in and access to media and to achieve a balanced, non-stereotypical portrayal of women in media, is far from being achieved.

15. With a rapid pace of change, there is growing urgency to build ecosystems that deliberately and more effectively direct ICT and media to contribute to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. To date, policy action to assess and overcome the gender gap has generally been sluggish. Only 30 per cent of the countries on the Web Index of the World Wide Web Foundation countries score higher than 5/10 for implementing concrete targets for gender equality in ICT access and use.[22] Affordability also remains a challenge.[23]

16. It is therefore welcome that efforts to bridge gender gaps and create more gender-responsive ICT policy and governance frameworks have increased. For example, the World Wide Web Foundation, under the Alliance for Affordable Internet

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[16] ITU, "A bright future in ICTs: opportunities for a new generation of women", report, February 2012, available from www.itu.int/ITU-D/sis/Gender/Documents/ITUBrightFutureforWomeninICT-English.pdf; and see Gené Teare and Ned Desmond, "The first comprehensive study on women in venture capital and their impact on female founders", Tech Crunch, 19 April 2016, available from https://techcrunch.com/2016/04/19/the-first-comprehensive-study-on-women-in-venture-capital/.

[17] Jenny Soffel, "What are the 21st-century skills every student needs?", 10 March 2016, World Economic Forum, available from www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/03/21st-century-skills-future-jobs-students/.

[18] Incheon Declaration: Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, available from www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED/pdf/FinalVersion-IncheonDeclaration.pdf, paras 8 and 10.

[19] UNESCO, Cracking the Code: Girls' and Women's Education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) (Paris, 2017).

[20] See ITU, "A bright future in ICTs".

[21] UNESCO, "World trends in freedom of expression and media development".

[22] See World Wide Web Foundation, "Web index report 2014-15", available from http://thewebindex.org/report/. See also www.broadbandcommission.org/workinggroups/Pages/bbandgender.aspx.

[23] Alliance for Affordable Internet, "2017 affordability report", February 2017, available from 2017 http://a4ai.org/.

and the Women's Rights Online project, has worked with governments to build national ICT policy coalitions[24] that involve women's organizations and activists and articulate priority ICT policy issues from a gender perspective.[25] Similarly, the Association for Progressive Communications has instituted a programme, called Feminist Tech Exchange, which builds ICT understanding of gender equality advocates, enabling them to better influence policy outcomes.[26] At the global level, women's groups have been very active, though still largely underrepresented, in the Internet Governance Forum and identified good practices around policies for women's access to ICT and for preventing online violence against women and girls.[27] Global partnerships such as the Broadband Commission Working Group on Gender and its Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide[28] and the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age, known as the Equals Partnership, are working to raise awareness, generate commitments, share understanding and good practices and rally multiple stakeholders to act.[29]

17. Networks that proactively promote gender equality and women's empowerment in and through media are also growing, including the Global Alliance on Media and Gender initiated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a partnership of media, civil society, academic, private and governmental organizations; the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), through its "Step It Up for Gender Equality" media compact, a network of over 60 international media outlets committed to ending gender-based discrimination in the shaping of public knowledge and opinion; and the Unstereotype Alliance, launched by UN-Women together with some 25 partners representing several of the world's biggest advertisers, advertising agencies and media platforms, to tackle the widespread prevalence of stereotypes, are other examples.

III. Influence and impact of the agreed conclusions on the global normative framework

18. In 2015, UN-Women and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) highlighted the normative progress on the linkages between gender equality and ICT since 2003.[30] Normative frameworks developed subsequent to the adoption by the Commission of the agreed conclusions at its forty-seventh session reflect the issues raised by the Commission. Commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women were reflected in the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information

[24] See http://apc.org/.

[25] See https://webfoundation.org/our-work/projects/womens-rights-online/.

[26] See www.apc.org/en/project/feminist-tech-exchange.

[27] Internet Governance Forum, "Overcoming barriers to enable women's meaningful Internet access", Policy report of the best practice forum on gender: gender and access, 2016, available from www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/3406/437; and Internet Governance Forum, "Online violence against women", final report of the best practice forum, 2015, available from www.intgovforum.org/cms/documents/best-practice-forums/623-bpf-online-abuse-and-gbv-against-women/file.

[28] See www.broadbandcommission.org/workinggroups/Pages/digital-gender-divide.aspx and www.broadbandcommission.org/workinggroups/Pages/bbandgender.aspx.

[29] See www.equals.org.

[30] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and ITU, "Action plan to close the digital gender gap", 2015, available from www.itu.int/en/action/gender-equality/Documents/ActionPlan.pdf.

Society, which cover women's full participation in the information society, a gender lens in policy development and the development of the requisite skills and applications that advance women's empowerment.[31] The outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society reflected new developments, reaffirmed previous commitments and recognized that ending the gender divide and achieving Goal 5 were mutually reinforcing efforts, as well as placing further emphasis on combating harassment (Assembly resolution 70/125). Relevant United Nations system entities, including UN-Women, are called upon to support the mainstreaming of gender in the World Summit on the Information Society process, including through a new emphasis on gender in the implementation and monitoring of the action lines. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development, in its follow-up to the Summit, has addressed these aspects in its work (see, for example, E/2017/31), and also called for strengthened and deepened collaboration between the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, including by sharing good practices and lessons learned in integrating a gender perspective in science, technology and innovation policymaking and implementation.

19. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reinforces the centrality of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls to sustainable development, and also addresses the role of technology and ICT. Goal 5 includes a means of implementation target 5.b, to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women. Women's access to and participation in ICT is also implicitly linked to the achievement of other targets under Goal 5, including eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, leadership and political participation, and economic empowerment. Gender-responsive approaches to ICT are also needed for the achievement of other Goals, including digital applications in areas such as health, agriculture, natural resource management and economic empowerment; access to technology (targets 9.c and 17.8); and quality technical education, ICT and science, technology, engineering and mathematics skill development (targets 4.3, 4.4 and 4.b).

20. Other intergovernmental bodies, as well as the mechanisms created by them, have also contributed to normative development. The General Assembly has, for example, addressed thematic applications of ICT for women's economic empowerment[32] and political participation.[33] It has also addressed girls' and women's education and skills, as well as the representation of women in ICT and media.[34] The Human Rights Council and the General Assembly have addressed women's human rights in the digital age.[35] The implications of digital technology for combating or perpetuating violence against women have been considered by the General Assembly and by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.[36]

21. Regional frameworks, partnerships and norms have also been enhanced. For example, the European Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality

[31] ITU, *World Summit on the Information Society: Outcome Documents — Geneva 2003 — Tunis 2005* (Geneva, 2005).

[32] See General Assembly resolutions 66/129, 66/195, 66/216, 68/139, 68/209 and 68/227.

[33] See General Assembly resolutions 66/130 and 71/212.

[34] See General Assembly resolutions 65/141, 66/184, 66/211, 67/195, 68/198, 68/220 and 70/213.

[35] See Human Rights Council resolutions 20/8, 26/13 and 32/13; see also A/HRC/35/9 and General Assembly resolution 71/199.

[36] See General Assembly resolution 68/181; see also A/HRC/31/55 and A/HRC/32/38.

2016-2019 contains provisions on women in ICT careers and studies and on cyberbullying.[37]

IV. National implementation efforts

22. Member States' responses incorporated into the present report indicate a varied approach to the implementation of the agreed conclusions. In general, they point to important advances as well as remaining gaps, thus highlighting the urgency for accelerated action so as to seize existing and emerging opportunities, and to fully align action with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on target 5.b.

A. Strategies and policies for women's participation in the digital revolution and media sector, and applications for women's empowerment

23. Concerns about the gender digital divide have galvanized Member States to integrate gender equality considerations into national ICT policies. Increasingly, gender equality strategies also respond to the opportunities presented by digital technology. As part of such efforts, Member States have taken steps to ensure that the principles of non-discrimination and of equal opportunities also apply to the field of ICT (Australia, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Italy, Jordan, Mauritius, Slovenia, Trinidad and Tobago). Given the persistent gender digital divide, the explicit integration of gender equality considerations in ICT strategies and the targeting of women as a beneficiary group will boost results in this sector.

24. Examples of mainstreaming gender perspectives in ICT frameworks include those of Peru, where the ICT strategy addresses unequal power relations between men and women, and of the Philippines, which includes gender equality as a pillar in its Declaration on Internet Rights and Principles. Mexico and Zimbabwe have mainstreamed gender perspectives in the implementation of ICT policies, laws and programmes. In steps to ensure that digital content and applications meet women's needs, Czechia prioritized the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in those sectors.

25. Several Member States reported on ICT priorities within gender equality strategies aimed at increasing the number of women in non-traditional sectors of studies and employment, including ICT, and on equality for women in related labour markets (Czechia, El Salvador, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, Switzerland). Such efforts respond to the opportunities created by the digital revolution and help to ensure digital equality in all its forms. Other Member States have integrated gender equality and digital empowerment within national development and cross-sectoral plans, largely with a focus on women's ICT skill development and employment (Brunei Darussalam, Jamaica).

26. The agreed conclusions called for the establishment of an affordable and accessible ICT-related infrastructure for all women and girls. In line with this, as well as target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, countries are focusing on

[37] See European Union, *Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2016), available from http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/document/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf, and the European Union Digital Agenda, see **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

enhancing girls' and women's access to ICT, including for rural women and marginalized groups of women (Costa Rica, Mali, Mauritius, Peru, Switzerland, Zimbabwe). Community empowerment programmes located in places frequented by women such as community centres, health centres, women's centres and schools (Mauritius), and the provision of subsidized connections at the household level for women in poverty (Costa Rica) are examples of efforts to reach underserved populations.

27. Women's digital empowerment requires funding, and universal access/service funds is an available, but underutilized resource.[74] Only Uganda reported on the use of such funds to support women's access in rural areas. Gender-responsive budgeting is another tool to ensure adequate funding for women's ICT-related needs, which Latvia plans to use.

28. In response to the call in the agreed conclusions for promoting gender equality in and through media, Member States have taken legal and regulatory steps, including on the development of a legal framework for broadcasting that provides for equal opportunities for women in television and radio services (United Kingdom), the harmonization of acts and the implementation of regulations that are inclusive of the principle of gender equality (Slovenia), restrictions on the dissemination of certain media content (Switzerland) and prohibitions on discrimination in granting broadcasting concessions (Mexico).

29. Action was also taken in support of equal opportunities and gender-balanced content among mass media, broadcasters and publishers (Latvia), and the elimination of stereotypes through the advertising standards authority (United Kingdom). Policies on the use of airtime were enhanced and a set of guidelines for television networks developed in the form of a media kit, entitled "Towards a gender fair media", which includes a code of ethics, guidance on gender equality and an anti-discrimination guide (Philippines). The Netherlands' national gender-responsive media policies focus on behaviour change among opinion leaders and news providers and the advertising and public communication industries.

30. Governments used special measures for women regarding tendering, the issuance of licences, funding and the acquisition of broadcast licences (Jamaica). Also with regard to broadcast licences, equality of opportunity as regards employment, for women and men (United Kingdom) became a requirement, as did gender diversity in co-financing of radio or television programming (Slovenia). The use of awards and other recognitions as incentives for the promotion of gender equality by the media and within media institutions was highlighted (Greece, Philippines).

31. The agreed conclusions emphasized the early and full participation of women and women's organizations in the development, implementation and monitoring of ICT and media policies and programmes and building capacities towards this end. In some instances, national gender equality mechanisms, as well as women's organizations, participated in the development of the national policy on science and technology and in creating equal opportunities for women in ICT (Costa Rica, Panama). Such opportunities were also created in the context of media policy development (Argentina, Jamaica, Netherlands). Gender focal points have been established to mainstream gender equality considerations within media institutions (Jamaica) and the Philippines established a Gender Equality Committee for media, made up of multiple government departments. The United Kingdom monitors the

[74] World Wide Web Foundation, "Closing the digital divide: a briefing note", April 2016 (briefing note to UN-Women).

implementation of diversity policy by the media and broadcasters, while the Netherlands involved civil society in the development of monitoring mechanisms.

32. The agreed conclusions made it clear that women should be able to fully enjoy the benefits of the information society and recognized information technologies and the media as central tools for women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equality. Responses for the present report confirmed that Governments recognize digital technologies primarily as tools for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, as well for enhancing women's education and skill development, political participation and social development (Costa Rica, Mauritius, Mexico, Peru, Zimbabwe).

33. Digital applications that contribute to women's economic empowerment encompass financial inclusion and mobile money, access to information for enhanced agricultural productivity (Mali, Uganda, United Kingdom) and the training of women entrepreneurs in ICT skills so as to enable them to better grow their businesses (Slovenia, United Kingdom). The 2016 Women and the Economy Forum of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation focused on digital literacy for economic inclusion as one of five sub-topics, and Ministers pledged to support the development of content and applications for women's economic empowerment, as reported by Peru.

34. Digital technology is used by non-governmental organizations to enable women to monitor service delivery (Uganda). Such technology can also support women when running for office or in monitoring elections (Mali). Other application areas have included improving social networking and mobilization of women and building literacy skills for out-of-school youth and supporting their participation in society (Uganda). Telemedicine is increasingly being used to improve women's health, including through the use of text messaging and online consultations, also in the context of development cooperation (Mali, Mexico, United Kingdom).

35. A number of Member States are integrating women's empowerment priorities through digital technologies in regional and multilateral cooperation. This can take the form of aid programmes (United Kingdom) that include gender equality and ICT elements. Germany drew attention to the Group of 20 digital agenda and efforts for gender equality. Switzerland emphasized the need to represent women's perspectives within global Internet governance.

36. Member States reported on the use of media to promote positive and non-traditional images and representation of women. Towards this end, capacity-building efforts were undertaken through workshops, conferences and sensitization training with media groups on advancing the balanced and positive representation of women (Azerbaijan, Slovenia, Turkey, Uganda), on gender perspectives in audio and video content and tackling the use of sexist language (Mexico), monitoring of news for gender equality issues (Zimbabwe) and the development of guidelines on the role of media in influencing public opinion (Slovenia). In an effort to promote diversity of women's perspectives, including those of minority and indigenous groups, opportunities were created for such groups to create news content on the Internet (Mexico).

37. Media was used to increase public awareness about discrimination, gender equality and women's roles and responsibilities in public and private life. This included such initiatives as public service announcements on gender equality (Mongolia) and annual achievers awards that highlight women's contributions to development and provide a platform for the identification of role models for young girls to emulate (Uganda). Other examples included advertisements and media

campaigns focused on women's rights, women's empowerment in politics and the promotion of positive popular media images of girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Germany, Mexico, Switzerland).

38. In line with the agreed conclusions, which called for the prevention of any adverse impact of the digital revolution on gender equality, Member States have focused in particular on the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls. Digital technology has been used to create online maps of areas considered unsafe, or to share information about incidents of violence against women. Digital games and mobile services have helped to raise awareness about violence against girls and women. A culture that condones violence against women has been challenged through the use of media and radio programmes have discussed issues of violence against women and girls. Stereotypes and sociocultural patterns that perpetuate violence against women and girls are being tracked by observatories, and guidelines and codes of ethics for media on reporting on and portraying violence against women are in wide use (Argentina, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, Slovenia, United Kingdom).

39. Media and ICT are also instrumental in preventing or responding to new forms of violence against women and girls, especially those that are emerging through the online environment. Legislative interventions aim at protecting women online from misogynist attacks, including through the imposition of penalties (Philippines). The prevention of violence against women and girls is included in national digital strategies (Mexico) and cyberbullying is being addressed through national educational policies (Trinidad and Tobago). Colombia has a national pact on zero tolerance for child sexual abuse on the Internet. Governments also reported on tools to flag incidents of inappropriate content and abuse and the availability of services to support victims of online abuse. Tools for addressing cyberviolence, harassment and sexual abuse are becoming available, and service providers are being trained in how to recognize and respond to cyberabuse. Assistance to women bloggers and online journalists around digital safety was also provided, including through development cooperation (Australia, Germany, Uganda).

B. Education, literacy and skills development for girls and women on ICT and media

40. The agreed conclusions stressed the need for the inclusion of education on ICT and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics for girls and young women in curricula at all levels, for increasing the number of women in these areas, for offering digital vocational and lifelong learning opportunities and for building digital literacy. They also called for the creation of women's and girls' capacity to develop ICT content. Since 2003, digital skills have become even more central to participation in all spheres of life, from learning to participation in the labour market, as well as social and political engagement. The understanding of digital literacy has evolved from a focus on basic skills to more sophisticated use of ICT, as well as the need to equip girls and women with the ability to assess and respond to many of the existing and potential threats that ICT and the Internet pose.[39] There has also been a convergence of information and media literacy[40] with digital literacy. The ability of women, girls, men and boys to critically assess media and ICT and their

[39] The Mozilla Foundation provides a useful definition of web literacy. See **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** and https://mozilla.github.io/womenandweb/.

[40] See https://en.unesco.org/themes/media-and-information-literacy.

representation of women and girls has become more urgent with the pervasiveness of social media and, often, the vitriolic misogyny found online.

41. In an effort to increase capacity to address risks and realize opportunities in the digital age, countries have implemented different measures to strengthen support for girls in building digital literacy skills, including through training offered to, for example, parents, teachers, parent-teacher associations, school communities, tertiary institutions and other actors. Sometimes, such efforts also extended to other leaders and role models, such as women community leaders and public and elected officials, including at the local level (Brunei Darussalam, Costa Rica, Czechia, Germany, Jamaica, Turkey, Zimbabwe).

42. Member States reported on a range of efforts to strengthen the digital literacy of girls and women. Malta promotes the European Computer Driving Licence, a computer skills certification programme, for women and girls. The United Kingdom promotes girls' and women's digital literacy through its development cooperation efforts, in partnership with private sector mobile providers. Those living in underserved areas have been a target of government investments, including through travelling outreach programmes such as a "Cyber Caravan" (Mauritius) and by providing girls and women refugees with computer skills (Azerbaijan).

43. Governments increasingly recognize ICT and education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics as necessary for successful learning, as a basis for active and informed citizenship and as drivers for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Australia, Jamaica). Member States have improved the overall ICT infrastructure in schools, including for enhanced learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Jamaica, Jordan, Paraguay, Turkey). The availability of ICT at school is also important for girls, who may lack such access at home. Steps have also been taken to integrate learning and skills development in the area of ICT and science, technology, engineering and mathematics into educational strategies as part of efforts to bring more girls and women into the related studies and career pipeline. Such skills are also seen as necessary for reducing and eliminating occupational segregation and economic barriers for women (Argentina).

44. Educational systems also contribute to addressing stereotypes, bias and unconscious bias around girls and science, technology, engineering and mathematics and ICT, including by engaging with teachers, instructors and teacher training institutions and communities. Shifting the perceptions, assumptions and attitude about girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics has involved redesigning pedagogies, curricula and the content used by educators, training on awareness of bias and linking educators with relevant professionals and with industry (Australia, Czechia, Greece, Jamaica, Lithuania, Netherlands, Paraguay). Reaching girls directly to shift their self-perception and confidence in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Italy, Switzerland), as well as their parents as partners of teachers (Netherlands), have also been key in raising awareness about gender stereotypes.

45. Financial incentives to advance girls' and women's formal education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics have also been put in place, such as free education for those enrolled at the advanced level in those areas of studies, with affirmative action to ensure access for women (Zimbabwe) and a science, technology, engineering and mathematics academy and fund to reach indigenous girls in particular (Australia).

46. Awareness of ICT and science, technology, engineering and mathematics and related skill development initiatives outside of the formal educational system have complemented the school-based curricula, sometimes being undertaken through partnerships with industry and universities. Targeted at young women, such initiatives include coding, seek to challenge negative stereotypes and provide mentoring and role models. Programmes, initiatives and competitions, such as a commitment by the Group of 20, known as "#eSkills4Girls" (Germany), TeacHer (Costa Rica), TechFuture Girls, Techmums, Mums in technology (which as a good practice provides free child care) and Digigirlz (United Kingdom), Curious Minds and Girl Geek Academy (Australia), Engineer Girls of Turkey (Turkey), Código X and Girls Power Tech (Mexico), #ChicasProgramadoras (Argentina), a science, technology, engineering and mathematics mentoring network and youth start-up weekend, organized by OECD in Mexico (Mexico), the development of applications (Brunei Darussalam) and support from professional associations such as the Federation of German Employers' Associations in the Metal and Electrical Engineering Industries (Germany) provide a range of opportunities and approaches.

C. Promotion of women in information and communications technology and media sectors, including in decision-making

47. The agreed conclusions called for equal opportunities for women and their participation in different categories and all levels of work in ICT and media sectors. In response, Member States have directed outreach and awareness-raising efforts at women, including young women, encouraging them to pursue more advanced ICT studies and skill development and to enter into related careers. Campaigns, such as Girls in ICT Day,[41] are being implemented in many countries (Brunei Darussalam, Costa Rica, Italy, Jamaica, Malta, Netherlands, Romania, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago). Other examples are the European "e-skills" and "Get online" weeks, where girls learn about digital skills for employment (Latvia), the "Women and girls go digital" campaign of the European Union Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs (Greece) and the development of a platform that provides information on vocational and academic opportunities in ICT, as well as through the development of a "Pact for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics" partnership with industries that reaches out to girls and their families on career opportunities (Germany). Working directly with career counsellors and providing guidance to them on how to better recruit young women (Lithuania), including content in the form of a website and a campaign on how to avoid stereotypes in presenting and discussing job opportunities (Germany) has also advanced the issue. With regard to media, Jamaica deploys efforts within universities to highlight career opportunities within the media sector to young women.

48. Supporting women to build more advanced and in-demand skills in ICT through vocational and higher education has also been a priority. In addition to breaking down occupational segregation and generating economic opportunities for women, this is also necessary to meet workforce gaps in ICT.

49. In the area of higher education, guidelines and policies on promoting women in non-traditional university studies have been instituted (Switzerland), goals to bring more women into ICT and science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors have been integrated into national education and career development strategies

[41] See www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Women-and-Girls/Girls-in-ICT-Portal/Pages/Portal.aspx.

(Australia, Greece), and scholarships for women in such studies provided at the tertiary level (Australia, Greece, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago).

50. Governments have also focused on increasing vocational and technical training for women in ICT and science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills (Lithuania, Netherlands, Switzerland). Technical training has been provided to women as part of lifelong learning strategies and programmes (Greece, Switzerland). In order to make technical training attractive and responsive to women, ICT industry organizations and technical training schools are working with women role models, undertaking gender audits of curricula and reducing bias and stereotypes (Netherlands, United Kingdom). The United Kingdom has set a target of 50 per cent enrolment of women in its National College for Digital Skills. Vocational education for women in male-dominated technology careers has also been a priority of development cooperation (Germany).

51. An example of good practice is a programme that sought to increase women's employment in ICT through multiple avenues such as outreach to schools, technical job training for young women, increased visibility of women in technology and technology job schemes with the private sector (Jordan).

52. Recruitment efforts targeted at women already in science, technology, engineering and mathematics studies and careers are also being implemented. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications in Estonia is actively reaching out to women through its website, whereas Czechia has tasked science and research bodies with developing career systems and selection processes that are non-biased and support women's advancement. In Switzerland, a toolkit has been developed for use by universities on how to recruit women to research positions in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

53. Measures have also been taken to retain and promote women once they are in ICT employment or entrepreneurial tracks. Such measures include the identification of models of supportive career paths and structures, which were shared with companies for implementation (Germany), addressing gender pay gaps (Australia, Estonia), instituting practices around flexible working arrangements and awareness-raising regarding parental leave (Australia), supporting women's re-entry into the workforce after extended career breaks (United Kingdom), the accreditation of employers who support gender equality (Australia), the training of company employees in male-dominated science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors on combating bias and stereotypes (Lithuania), and supporting women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics research (Switzerland). Women-headed businesses and women innovators have also been supported through grants and incubation programmes (Australia, Jordan).

54. In order to support women advancing within the media sector, professional associations are playing an important role, including through holding workshops and conferences and providing mentoring (Germany). In the context of its development cooperation, Germany has provided women journalists the opportunity to gain practical experience through specially created publishing platforms.

55. In order to implement the call for the provision of management, negotiation and leadership training, actions have included training for women in leadership skills and critical competencies (Jordan, Lithuania), structural changes to help women professors advance in the science system through a programme entitled "Women to the top" (Germany), and the creation of directories of women in technology and media with a view to helping them secure high-level appointments (Malta).

56. In the media sector, countries have implemented capacity-building programmes for professional women to participate in decision-making processes and training in

new technologies (Jamaica). Women journalists have been recognized through awards (Uganda), and young journalists and women journalists have been trained in leadership skills (Mongolia, Zimbabwe). Awareness of gender issues has been raised within media institutions, both among decision makers and others in the workforce (Greece, Mongolia, Slovenia). Jordan reported on a subregional project, supported by Sweden and Norway, to address gender imbalance in media in middle and senior management positions. Towards this end, women were given the opportunity to gain skills and develop strategies and support networks so as to foster their becoming leaders.

57. Member States also worked towards increasing the number of women in the workforce as well as in leadership positions through special measures. These include the issuance of directives on equal representation in state-owned enterprise boards (Italy, Zimbabwe) and government-subsidized salaries for young women in technology jobs (Jordan, Mexico). Czechia is exploring positive measures to promote higher representation of women in science and research and in bodies responsible for the creation of national policies and decision-making in universities and research institutions.

D. Strengthening the evidence base

58. The agreed conclusions highlighted the need for research into all aspects of the impact of the media and ICT on women and girls, for good practices and for more and better data. Data availability remains a challenge, as only 39 per cent of countries produce regular gender statistics on information and communications technologies and 15 per cent on gender and media.[42]

59. At the same time, efforts are under way to help address those challenges and to build a robust evidence base through adequate data collection and research and analysis. Gender statistics on ICT and media are being captured under a range of modalities. A number of countries reported that in their annual statistical collections, gender statistics as well as data reflecting linkages between science, technology, engineering and mathematics and ICT with the labour force and education are included (Australia, Czechia, Jamaica, Latvia, Netherlands, Slovenia). Slovenia aligns its data collection with European Union model questionnaires and Eurostat norms pertaining to household surveys on individual and household use of ICT. In one example, the collection of such data is promoted through an inter-agency committee on gender statistics (Philippines). Data are also collected in the context of national frameworks such as Switzerland's information society agenda, Australia's national innovation and science agenda and Jamaica's national development plan and gender strategy.

60. Data collection on gender statistics, science, technology, engineering and mathematics/ICT and media contributes to the monitoring of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Latvia). Through its participation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics and gender advancement project of UNESCO, Argentina also monitors progress in these areas.

61. The collection of gender statistics on ICT and media is sometimes also part of periodic or special undertakings, including on topical issues such as e-skills (Slovenia), girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics studies (Australia, Netherlands, Slovenia) and the gender pay gap (Estonia). Research and data needs can also drive data collection (Czechia), including on attitudes about

[42] E/CN.3/2013/10.

gender roles (Estonia). Given the importance of measuring the impact of ICT and media on women's empowerment, Switzerland and Australia reported on capturing statistics on women's use of ICT and the benefits derived therefrom.

62. Governments also developed guidance on gender statistics, such as Mongolia's gender-sensitive indicators for media. Various platforms make relevant data more accessible. These include a national evidence base that brings data on gender issues and science, technology, engineering and mathematics education across different levels of study together to better understand the related pathways (Australia), as well as observatories on aspects of gender and ICT education (Italy), gender, ICT and media indicators (Jamaica), and on mainstreaming a gender perspective in government policies around critical area of concern J of the Beijing Platform for Action (Greece).

63. Research studies were conducted to inform policy and action, including in the areas of internet applications and their use (Switzerland), and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, ICT, innovation and employment and entrepreneurship (Germany, Greece, Jordan). In the context of media, research focused on gender stereotypes and media representation and their effects on young women and their choices (Netherlands, Turkey), the harmful effects of portrayals of sexism and violence (Netherlands, Turkey), language and prejudice, the opinions of media professionals (Germany, Netherlands) and the history of women's representation and women in media, as well as media monitoring of women's ownership of media businesses and related barriers (Germany, Jamaica). Impact analysis has also been applied to media trainings, gender mainstreaming in ICT and the impact of the implementation of legislation (Czechia, Jamaica, Lithuania).

64. Such efforts are complemented and enhanced through a number of global multi-stakeholder efforts. The Partnership on Measuring of ICT for Development,[43] a multi-stakeholder group to follow up on World Summit commitments, includes a working group on gender, which seeks to better understand the different ways in which men and women experience ICT and to present a more accurate picture of the scope and intensity of the gender-based digital divide. The Working Group issued a report on existing and proposed indicators on gender and ICT access, education and employment, as well as the use of ICT for economic and social development.[44] ITU also maintains statistics on women's access to ICT as called for under the agreed conclusions, which will also contribute to tracking progress on target 5.b and other targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.[45]

65. The recently established Equals Partnership brings together United Nations system entities, governments, the private sector and civil society organizations to advance gender equality in the digital age. Its core mandate is to raise awareness, secure action-oriented commitments and identify and replicate good practices through coalitions around policy, leadership and skills.[46] Its dedicated research component will carry out primary research and collect secondary data on gender equality and track progress towards the Equals Partnership goals. It will produce an annual report on the state of digital gender equality, the first of which is to be published in 2018.

[43] See www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/intlcoop/partnership/default.aspx.

[44] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Measuring ICT and Gender: An Assessment* (New York and Geneva, 2014), available from http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/webdtlstict2014d1_en.pdf.

[45] See www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/statistics/2017/Individuals using the Internet by gender_corrected.xls.

[46] See www.equals.org and the action map www.equals.org/actionmap.

66. The Global Alliance on Media and Gender of UNESCO is at the forefront of data collection, monitoring and knowledge-sharing.[47] UNESCO also developed gender-sensitive indicators for media and the global survey on gender and media,[48] which are important contributions to strengthening the data and evidence base on women and the media.

67. Other new knowledge-sharing and collaborative partnerships include the #eSkills4Girls initiative launched by the Group of 20 under Germany's presidency in 2017 and in partnership with United Nations system entities and OECD. In addition to creating flagship projects on gender digital equality, the initiative seeks to collect and disseminate information, policy recommendations and good practices on education and employment in the digital economy.[49]

V. Conclusions, recommendations and future priorities

68. The agreed conclusions of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women strengthened the normative framework on women's access to and participation in ICT and the media and provided the impetus for other intergovernmental processes to subsequently address the issue.

69. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions, Member States and other stakeholders have enhanced policy frameworks, built new partnerships, expanded data collection and addressed new and emerging issues. However, significant implementation gaps remain that require urgent attention, in particular in the context of the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the focus on ICT in the Sustainable Development Goals.

70. Implementation efforts have concentrated on women's participation in the ICT sector, including in decision-making, women's and girls' education and training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and subsequent employment opportunities, the use of ICT in education and the economy and the representation of women and girls in and through media. Areas such as online violence and the harassment of women and girls received increased attention.

71. Globally, the persistent and even widening gender gaps in ICT access and usage, declining enrolment of women and girls in computer science, in some regions, and virulent forms of online violence against women are significant concerns that need to be addressed.

72. In order to address these concerns, Member States and other stakeholders are encouraged to take a comprehensive and integrated approach to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and their human rights in the digital age, especially through the following measures:

(a) Strengthen linkages among, and align the implementation of, national sustainable development, ICT and gender equality strategies and action plans, and

[47] See www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/crosscutting-priorities/gender-and-media/global-alliance-on-media-and-gender/homepage.

[48] See UNESCO, *Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media: Framework of Indicators to Gauge Gender Sensitivity in Media Operations and Content* (Paris, 2012), available from www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/gender-sensitive-indicators-for-media-framework-of-indicators-to-gauge-gender-sensitivity-in-media-operations-and-content; and www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/crosscutting-priorities/gender-and-media/women-make-the-news-2016/facts-and-figures.

[49] See www.eskills4girls.org.

include targets, time frames and allocate resources for achieving those strategies and plans; enhance collaboration among relevant ministries and national gender equality mechanisms; and apply gender-responsive budgeting in ICT and media sectors;

(b) Prioritize the closing of the gender gap in ICT access and use, including by expanding affordability, providing community access models and ensuring women's control over technology resources (for example, access to and use of mobile phones);

(c) Ensure that girls' and women's access to ICT effectively contributes to their empowerment through their increased participation in the development of content, applications, products and services that meet women's needs and promote their empowerment; support such efforts through government funding and programmes; and build partnerships and directly engage with and support women's organizations in such efforts;

(d) Work with the technology and ICT sectors to enhance attention to the gender-specific impact of digital products and services and to give priority to the needs of women and girls; and anticipate and leverage emerging opportunities in technology for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

(e) Reflect girls' and women's differentiated experiences and needs in the making, implementation and monitoring of policy relating to ICT and media, and strengthen related capacities;

(f) Address existing and emerging threats, including online violence against women and girls, violations of privacy and the gender-specific implications of artificial intelligence, as well as automation and other disruptors of sectors that have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, in collaboration with women's organizations, the ICT community and other stakeholders;

(g) Take targeted measures, including temporary special measures, to increase the number, retention and promotion of women in ICT and media sectors and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, including in employment and entrepreneurship;

(h) Increase the quality and scope of digital literacy efforts to encompass women's ability to contribute to content development and applications of ICT, including through coding, as well as to understand implications relating to privacy, security, data use and the societal impacts of ICT;

(i) Strengthen efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes and social norms and practices that discriminate against women and girls in ICT and media, and strengthen the use of ICT and the media for such change;

(j) Improve the collection, compilation and dissemination of gender statistics and analysis on all aspects of women's and girls' access to, use of and participation in ICT and media; increase evidence regarding the impact of ICT on gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(k) Support and engage in global and regional partnerships that seek to deepen understanding, knowledge-sharing and action on gender-responsive ICT and media, including through the development of innovative approaches and the replication and scaling of proven practices, so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Discussion guide for the ministerial round tables to be held under the priority theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls"

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2015/6 on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council decided that the session of the Commission would include a ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as their human rights, and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission, and that the segment would include ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues.

2. In accordance with the multi-year programme of work of the Commission, as contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2016/3, the Commission will consider "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls" as its priority theme for the sixty-second session, to be held from 12 to 23 March 2018. Further to that decision, it is proposed that, at that session, the Commission hold ministerial round tables to provide ministers with opportunities for high-level engagement on key issues arising under the priority theme.

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II. Organizational matters

A. Theme and topics

3. Under the priority theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls", the Commission will hold four ministerial round tables, to be held in two parallel meetings on the following topics:

(a) Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through access to education, infrastructure and technology, food security and nutrition;

(b) Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of access to justice, social services and health care.

4. The ministerial round tables should focus on the exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the proposed topics. Ministers will be encouraged to look ahead towards realizing gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls and to realizing their rights to an adequate standard of living, a life free of violence and harmful practices, land and productive assets, food security and nutrition, education and health care. Ministers will be encouraged to highlight the steps and measures that are necessary and planned in order to ensure that national responses effectively contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls and to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, so that no rural woman or girl is left behind.

B. Participants

5. The round tables will provide ministers attending the sixty-second session of the Commission with the opportunity to engage in dialogue and discussion. They will be open to all Member States and observers.

6. Ministers are invited to indicate, in advance and preferably no later than 27 February 2018, the ministerial round table in which they would prefer to participate, as well as their second preference. Approximately 15 to 20 ministers are expected to participate in each round table. The Chairs of the ministerial round tables will have a list of ministers who have signed up for each round table, but no list of speakers will be prepared in advance.

C. Times and locations

7. The ministerial round tables will be held at Headquarters, in New York, on Monday, 12 March 2018, from 3 to 6 p.m., at the times set out in the table below.

Round table	Time	Location
Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through access to education, infrastructure and technology, food security and nutrition	3–4.30 p.m.	Conference room 4
Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of access to justice, social services and health care	3–4.30 p.m.	Conference room 1
Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through access to education, infrastructure and technology, food security and nutrition	4.30–6 p.m.	Conference room 4
Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of access to justice, social services and health care	4.30–6 p.m.	Conference room 1

8. The Chairs of the ministerial round tables will guide the discussion with a view to promoting interaction. Interventions are not to exceed three minutes, and an emphasis will be placed on dialogue. Ministers will be encouraged to ask questions and comment on interventions made during the dialogue. Time permitting, ministers may be given the opportunity to make more than one intervention. Written statements are strongly discouraged.

D. Outcome

9. The outcomes of the ministerial round tables will be in the form of Chairs' summaries, prepared in consultation with the regional groups through the members of the Bureau.

III. Items for discussion in the ministerial round tables

A. Background

10. The discussion of the priority theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls" will provide the Commission with an opportunity to consider the topic in terms of the realization of the human rights of rural women and girls, which is necessary for their livelihoods, well-being and resilience.

11. Rural women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty, exclusion and the effects of environmental and climate change. Rural women and girls face multiple and intersecting inequalities and forms of discrimination. Because of prevailing discriminatory gender norms, rural women and girls tend to be less educated than men

and boys, with less access to information, skills, training and labour markets, while facing greater risks of violence and harmful practices. Different groups of rural women and girls have particular needs and priorities, warranting tailored policy and institutional responses in order to reach all women and girls in rural areas and ensure that no one is left behind.

12. During the round tables, ministers will be invited to consider the questions in the discussion guide below and to focus on what needs to be done to accelerate the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to realize the human rights and empowerment of rural women and girls. Ministers are encouraged to identify effective policies, what needs to be done and who will take the required steps and measures. Ministers are also encouraged to use the discussion guide and to consult the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme of the sixty-second session (E/CN.6/2018/3).

B. Discussion guide

Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through access to education, infrastructure and technology, food security and nutrition

13. Realizing the right of rural women and girls to quality, affordable and accessible education throughout the life cycle is at the core of attaining Sustainable Development Goal 4. Despite the gains made in achieving gender parity in primary school enrolment in developing countries, much remains to be done to reach universal primary completion, especially in rural areas. Rural women and girls are at the greatest disadvantage in terms of schooling, literacy and adult education. Poverty and location are the factors that determine whether girls go to school, with the poorest girls in rural areas at the greatest risk of exclusion from school. Of particular concern for rural girls is the persistent and widespread lack of qualified teachers in rural areas. Greater and more systematic investments are required to achieve universal free public primary and secondary education for all and to provide educational facilities with qualified teachers at all levels in rural areas.

14. Infrastructure and technology, including information and communications technologies (ICTs), tend to reach rural women and girls last, even though ICTs are vital for relieving rural women and girls of their disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and enhancing their economic and educational opportunities. The poorest people in rural areas suffer most from lack of access to water, especially the women and girls who are responsible for collecting it. Rural women and girls are also disproportionately affected by the lack of safe, dignified and private sanitation facilities. Limited access to energy and connectivity have negative educational and economic outcomes in rural areas. Global connnectivity through the Internet and mobile phones is on the rise, although a gender digital divide remains worldwide, with the 3.9 billion people who are offline being predominantly rural, poorer, less educated and women and girls. Rapidly declining costs of renewable energy technologies and decentralized sustainable energy solutions, however, have already begun to prove beneficial for rural women's livelihoods, well-being and resilience. Greater investments in gender-responsive rural infrastructure and technology, including ICTs, by Governments and the private sector are necessary for gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

15. Fulfilling the right of rural women and girls right to food and nutrition of adequate quality and quantity is critical. Yet rural women and girls continue to suffer

from food insecurity and malnutrition, with the number of chronically undernourished people increasing around the world. Globally, women are slightly more likely to experience food insecurity than men. Goal 2 addresses the structural barriers that place rural women and girls at a disadvantage with respect to food security and nutrition. It is unlikely, however, that hunger and malnutrition will be eradicated by 2030 unless more coordinated efforts and greater investments are made to respond effectively to food crises around the world. This would mean expanding decent work opportunities and social protection in rural areas, increasing agricultural productivity and smallholder incomes, supporting smallholder sustainable agriculture and food production systems, and conserving and equitably sharing the benefits of agricultural biodiversity. It would also entail negotiating trade rules that protect domestic policy space for agricultural development and food security, while prioritizing women's empowerment and gender equality.

16. Ministers are invited to consider the following questions to help focus the dialogue:

(a) What steps have Governments taken to ensure that rural women and girls have access to affordable, quality education throughout their life cycles and that they complete such education?

(b) What investments are Governments making to ensure that essential infrastructure, including sustainable energy, sustainable transport and safely managed water and sanitation, improve the lives, livelihoods and resilience of rural women and girls?

(c) What steps have Member States taken to ensure that ICTs and other technologies reach and benefit rural women and girls with respect to their economic and political empowerment?

(d) What are examples of national policies that have resulted in rural women and girls gaining access to food and nutrition of adequate quality and quantity?

Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of access to justice, social services and health care

17. Extending social protection to all rural women and girls is a key enabler for the realization of their right to an adequate standard of living. Violence against women and girls is a significant human rights violation in all countries, the elimination of which is highlighted in Goal 5, target 2. Violence occurs in private and public places and takes many forms. Globally, over one third of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner, or sexual violence from a non-partner, at some point in their lives. Although data is not available for all countries, of the 48 countries with recent data on physical or sexual violence committed by a husband/partner in the past 12 months, 26 showed higher rates in rural areas than in urban areas. Evidence also shows that the prevalence of harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, may be more prevalent in rural areas. Those conditions are exacerbated by the limited access of rural women and girls to justice and the lack of effective legal, juridical and institutional remedies. Rural women and girls who are subjected to violence and harmful practices must also be assured access to essential social, health and justice services.

18. Achieving universal health coverage, as called for in Goal 3, target 8, is necessary for realizing the right of rural women and girls to the highest attainable

standard of health, inclusive of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Maternal deaths, many of which are preventable, are linked to inadequate health services for women and girls, in particular for the poorest and those living in rural areas. Distance from health facilities and qualified health professionals is a serious concern for rural women and girls. Mobile technologies have been helpful in some cases. Fiscal and social policies that facilitate investments in essential health-care infrastructure and social services are also needed to respond effectively to violence against rural women and girls.

19. Ministers are invited to consider the following questions to help focus the dialogue:

(a) What are examples of effective national laws, policies and services that have helped to prevent gender-based violence and harmful practices against rural women and girls and ensured their access to justice?

(b) What measures have achieved proven results in the provision of affordable and accessible health-care services for all rural women and girls and ensured universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights?

(c) How have Governments ensured that social protection coverage and gender-responsive social services reach all rural women and girls?